

**GENDER ISSUES IN DEVELOPMENT:  
AN AFRICAN RURAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

**ANGELA JOY NOSIPHO FETSHA**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR H.J. SWANEPOEL**

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## ABSTRACT

The need to carry out an analysis of gender issues in development stems from a concern about the persistent inequalities surrounding African rural women.

Women assume social and economic roles inside and outside the household but their contribution does not receive due recognition. Having being excluded from crucial decision making processes, their productive roles have been secondary to their reproductive responsibilities.

The purpose of this study was to highlight the negative impact imposed by gender oppression on women's economic and social progress.

This necessitated an in-depth review of literature that included journals, books, newspaper articles and general publications.

The review reflected that women have undisputedly faced social, cultural, economic, political and educational barriers and that simple rhetoric has not done much to alleviate women's subordinate position and dependency on men.

Finally a suggested plan of action followed to provide an axis around which gender issues in development should revolve.

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Thank you dad for everything you have done for me.

This is for you.

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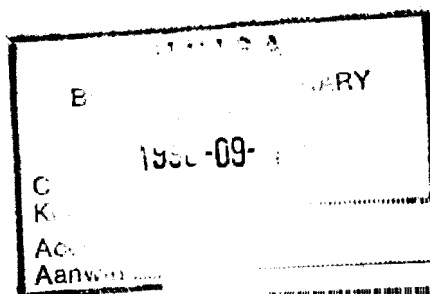
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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Before constructing an evaluation of issues in Africa pertaining to women, one needs a better understanding of the dynamics of men and women's experiences within the household. Charlton (1984:1) states that in the 1950s scholars, policy makers had begun to discuss the meaning of development for most of the world but the role of the individual in the process of economic and social development was barely addressed and less frequently understood. Only since the 1970s have development discussions focused on the majority of the human race, women.

Since the 1970s Charlton (1984:1) notes that there had been a lot on research projects, policy pronouncements designed to promote an awareness of, and concern for the development planning on women's lives. National and international agencies began to argue that women should have some control over the direction development takes, at least on the local level.

In Africa, Ocaya-Lakidi (1993:10) emphasizes that the most pressing issue in any rural development effort is that related to social and economic progress. This has been lagging behind for rural women. The new interest in the 1970s in women clearly indicates the far reaching challenges taking place throughout the developing world and has been marked by calls and the need for educational opportunities for women including girls. Barratt (1989:123) terms this the educational deficiency that needs urgent attention. Added to this are also a variety of needs for women such as general health and welfare for the woman and her children, women's decision to seek paid employment in cities with the absence of their male counterparts and the requirement to improve their quality of life in general.

These events have contributed to the debate about women and development for they served as a constant reminder that women care about themselves, for each other, their families, their communities and that they desire more control over their own lives.

As Goody (1982:263) notes, women have been the most exploited within households and communities in terms of their labour, household chores and responsibilities.

Patriarchy has also tended to inhibit women's progress in that it has been an institution that has relegated women to their current subordinate positions.



In addition to the attention generated by women themselves, other factors contributing to the discussions on women and development have been the growing awareness of the complexity of the development process itself. The 1950s and 1960s explanations on low productivity, one could argue, have been inadequate to understand women's issues in that no remarkable change has been noted in the quality of life of women.

Although Mayer (1978:62) long after the 1960s reached the conclusion that over two or more generations, the physical workload of rural women was unlikely to be a major problem due to the increase in available female labour and improved techniques of production in agriculture, women's traditional chores have changed little. Cloete (1992:51) argues that the mother continues to labour for her family's survival. She carries the burden of work at a stage in her life where she should be close to retiring. She is female and society expects her to carry out this responsibility.

Hardiman (1988:209) addresses two crucial "myths" about women: the first, that because women contribute only a small percentage in the formal sector, they do not make a significant contribution to the national economy; the second is that overall economic development in time should lead to an improvement in the status of women.

This is in line with the assumption that development would eventually reach the poorest of the poor including women. Taylor (1989:113) however disputes this fact by arguing that women have been in a disadvantageous position partly because of a lack of access to important resources including land. Mair (1969:154) had supported this view by pointing out that an important feature in Africa has been that customarily, access to land - an important resource for rural livelihood-has been largely confined to male household members.

Apart from gender differentials in agricultural contributions and earnings, there has also been the sheer time contribution by rural women to a complex range of unpaid tasks such as gathering wood, cooking and the building up of kin networks. Women have been and are still burdened with a significant responsibility for family subsistence and are often - with the absence of men - in female headed households, the sole economic providers (Murray 1981:65).

Their ability to fulfil their responsibilities is partly and significantly constrained by limited resources and means at their command, a constraint that stems not merely from their position in society but also from gender. These inequalities take varying

forms as in intra-family differences in the distribution of basic necessities such as income, women's systematically disadvantaged position in the labour market, on little or no access to crucial means of production associated with modernized production technology.

The fact that women are dominated by men is undeniable. While women bear children, there exists no hard evidence that they are also naturally forced to raise them. Society tends to link child-bearing to child-rearing and associated women with children, thus confining them to the domestic sphere. Therein lies women's subordination, in their exclusion from the world of public affairs and social power. In addition, patriarchy has more often kept women as marginalised as they are (Mayer 1975:16).

Niehaus (1987:14) concludes that women's contribution to the families' income is not taken into account although it makes the difference between starvation and subsistence. Young girls leave school early, partly because their parents can no longer afford to keep them there, but that also the family desperately needs the money they can earn or help to earn, while their mothers work and take care of the home and younger children.

The rural women is therefore trapped in a vicious circle primarily because she is trapped by poverty. Guyer (1981:176) states that the woman cannot afford to fend for her children, more so educating female children and so this continues to perpetuate inequalities even though these react against economic interests of communities at large. Hence Bharathi (1992:681) re-iterates that as long as education remains a distant dream to women and girls, development programmes when in place, would not yield the desired results.

Associated with low incomes, limited education, problems of malnutrition and lack of medical care for women, the woman is to bear the burden brought about by lack of water, proper sanitation, poor transportation facilities among others. The improved techniques surrounding the women brought about by economic development and modernization are usually monopolized by men, creating a widening gap between the skill levels of men and women. These are the factors that Levine (1966:18) explains as gender oriented and to the disadvantage of women.

Lastly, economic development has been viewed by most scholars to be a gradual change from family sized production to high technology, specialized production of goods and services. It is further argued by these scholars that this makes it possible to access elaborate social infrastructure.

However such changes in high technology and modern infrastructure have been set up with men in mind. This situation illustrates the impossibility of partial changes and how economic modernization cannot go it alone without concurrent considerations of women's needs.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study on Gender Issues in Development: An African Rural Perspective, through literature review seeks to address the following objectives:

- 1.2.1 to describe the historical nature of persistent inequalities between men and women within the household and society;
- 1.2.2 to establish the underlying causes of women's poverty situation within rural households;
- 1.2.3 to demonstrate the scope of the negative impact of patriarchy and cultural factors on women's economic progress;
- 1.2.4 to evaluate the effects of a lack of access to productive resources and control over household income by women;
- 1.2.5 to analyse the value of women's work, participation and needs in a development context.

## 1.3 REVIEW

Chapter 1 is the introductory part after which five separate sections address different issues. Chapter 2 sets the framework for a discussion of rural poverty and the manner in which it impacts negatively on women. Of importance is the role that has been assumed by custom and law within the African traditional society.

Land has been an important resource in African agricultural production contributing to household livelihood. However, women have been excluded in land ownership, could not enter into contracts without the aid of a male guardian unless elaborately qualified. Added to this, women's disadvantaged position has been compounded by a situation whereby in development programmes international rhetoric has influenced most of Africa's strategies thus having very limited success relative to the scale of women's problems.

The issue of channelling resources to the urban centres reflected in urban biased development also has negative effects as this tends to neglect the rural areas. The

women thus become more affected in a negative way by urban bias. Furthermore this section looks at the poverty situations and the burden within households that is worsened by the absence of men due to migration to urban centres in search of employment opportunities. Cash remittances from the men tend to be minimal or non-existent, leaving the women with scanty means of survival. The most critical aspect in the chapter is that women, have been stripped of those aspects of life widely considered to be basic human rights throughout the world.

Closely related to the above critical issues are cultural factors. Chapter 3 looks at women in rural areas as having been traditionally viewed as ordinary workers. They carry a considerable economic responsibility in the household without benefiting from the fruits of their labour.

Some do have informal power and status as long as they give recognition for support received and do not make their male counterparts feel threatened by their achievements. Often manipulated by economic necessity many women, against societal expectations take the initiative to start their own or family businesses or have started mutual support organizations. This reflects the resistance against long standing prejudices, bias and persistent inequalities within their households and communities.

The extent of their participation in decisions affecting their lives is also discussed as it is partly against this background that gender inequalities are pursued. Added to prejudiced development, very low levels of literacy limit their access to employment opportunities. The alternative has been for women to be the child-minders that society at large expects them to be, a situation that inhibits their economic progress.

The discussion in Chapter 4 revolves around women's situation as most concerning, because they not only lack resources but are also caught up by forces over which they have no control. Most development projects compound their problems as these projects lack the acknowledging of the complementary nature of household and community roles assumed by women's activities.

Women's economic activities are discussed as increasingly typifying a marginal productive role partly due to poor resources at their disposal. Among the most needed resources is capital for initiating income generating activities, lack of services for family health including family planning. Even when their priorities seem clear at national level, there tends to be trade-offs with competing priorities acting against improvement of the women's quality of life.

The main focus of Chapter 5 is to look at specific aspects that involve a practical standpoint on what is suitable for women's economic progress. Closely related to the preceeding chapter, technology and infrastructure are productive resources where women's involvement in institutions that serve to transfer technology and infrastructure has been lacking.

Government agencies, private development organizations, foreign agencies have mostly disregarded women's needs and preferences, as well as informing and educating them about available alternatives. Above all there seems to be few platforms whereby women can communicate their needs, resulting in development as a whole having unintended effects.

The last part - Chapter 6 - surveys alternative development strategies, having analysed in the preceeding sections the views on what women's conditions are in Africa. This section attempts to highlight that a successful development policy must be built on an understanding of what has occurred to women previously, how their lives have been determined by both their productive and reproductive roles. The most important feature of the final chapter is the emphasis on the human aspect when addressing development issues with equitable participation by women for women in decisions affecting their daily lives, being dominant.

## 1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study concentrated on Africa as a continent, analysing rural women's experiences on a comparative basis. South Africa has tended to receive dominance due to the advantage of the availability of first hand information and experience on women's issues. Although this has been the case, it can be argued that South African women have a lot in common with women throughout Africa.

## 1.5 METHODOLOGY

The concern to focus on the study stems from a need to highlight the position of rural women against what existing literature has observed.

Within the African perspective, much has already been documented about the marginal roles assumed by women, but little has been achieved in eliminating gender inequalities. The purpose is to determine through comparative analysis the situation of women in development as it obtains presently with a historical background in mind.

The study therefore, mainly concentrates on an in-depth analysis of literature that includes journals, newspaper articles, books and general publications.

## **1.6 CONCLUSION**

This chapter was devoted to the introduction of the study of Gender Issues In Development within an African context. It has focused on a historical point of view, development initiatives of the early 1950s, 1960s and 1970s geared at addressing gender inequalities. From a comparative perspective the chapter has highlighted that development in general has not resulted in a remarkable change in the quality of life of women.

A more significant aspect of the chapter is the outline of the various sections and the subsequent specification of the objectives of the study. The delineation of the scope of the study and the description of a methodology to be used in reaching the study's objectives were also part of the introduction to the study of Gender Issues In Development.

# CHAPTER 2

## CRITICAL ISSUES

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an attempt at highlighting the crucial issues encountered by women in the rural areas in their efforts to make a living. The issue of urban bias forms part of the discussion as such bias has led to the underdevelopment of the rural areas. Women in this regard have had to suffer most under such underdevelopment.

The role of gender inequalities from a development perspective is also reviewed, specifically in the rural set-up with women in mind as well as taking into account traditional views. The causes of chronic poverty are analysed as part of the factors having an impact on low levels of women's socio-economic status.

Closely related to socio-economic levels, an examination of the migratory labour system and its effects on female headed households is looked into.

### 2.2 RURAL POVERTY

Absolute poverty is explained by Engberg (1990:12) as a situation where basic human needs are scarcely met at minimum levels required for survival. To this regard Engberg (1990:12) attaches the incidence measurable by the extent of malnutrition, life expectancy and level of education.

Bernstein (1975:8) notes that women, specifically those residing in the rural areas have been stripped of those things which are considered as basic human rights throughout the world: the right to live any normal kind of family life; the right to bring up and care for their own children; the right to live with their husbands.

The issues of poverty and so of development are noted by the United Nations (1989:363) as being questions of equality. When women's efforts in development are constrained by obsolete stereotypes, inadequate health services, lack of social support mechanisms for their caring and child bearing roles, their families, their communities and society as a whole suffer.

Their problems and hence poverty have been partly influenced by custom and tradition which have deliberately inhibited women's economic roles. For example, under customary law African women have been designated virtually perpetual minors who cannot own property in their own right and inherit it (Staudt 1986:20). This has prohibited the concepts of initiative and independence in women's socio-economic spheres of life as evidenced in contractual obligations where women could not enter into contracts without the aid of a male guardian unless elaborately qualified.

Reference is also made by Staudt (1986:20) to the colonial and contemporary periods in Africa which were filled with changes which could be considered detrimental to women at large and thus their poverty situation. These have been the disproportionate distribution of crucial resources to men and thereby generating greater female dependency on men. Engberg (1990:13) attaches the importance of very low literacy levels to women's poverty situation. Educational opportunities have been made more available to males than females, thus promoting a gender ideology appropriate to the ideas of female domesticity.

The deterioration in the economic situation of women and decline in their status has been observed to continue by Hafkin and Bay (1976:17) even in some of the most "progressive" African countries, for example Tanzania. Women were to form the nucleus of development in Tanzania but have been worse off and poverty stricken than they had ever been.

Some of the problems in alleviating the poverty situation is explained by Hafkin and Bay (1976:17) as those relating to rural development projects. Women are expected to put in the same amount of time engaging in farm labour than men are; but women are also expected to continue with their domestic labour and thus have a double burden. Throughout this process women's work is unremunerated.

Brain (1976:75) faults government bureaucrats and their expatriate advisors for their insensitivity to the women's poverty situation and women's needs in development. Whatever the intentions of rural development projects are, they have certainly not resulted in the restoration or safe-guarding of women's quality of life. Hence their persistent poverty conditions.

In the past, most discussions and policy decisions concerning agricultural production omitted any serious consideration of women's role in agriculture which is an important aspect of women's livelihood and their households. Moving towards a healthy corrective, Tadesse (1984:9) argues that the last two decades were marked by the emergence of impractical and theoretical documentation of women's multiple roles in production and reproduction.



Although some positive strides have been observed, persistent myths about African agriculture which have partly led to women's poverty situation, still occur. Tadesse (1984:9) quotes these issues as follows:

- 2.2.1 The concept "farmer" denotes only men and implies that at best women only assist in agricultural production: this myth has had great implications for the farming women in agriculture and the allocation of resources;
- 2.2.2 Women do not participate in cash crop production: the fact is they do participate but only as an unremunerated familial labour force and seasonal workers on plantations. It is not that they do not participate but they do not control the income from cash crop production;
- 2.2.3 Modernization and development are mutual and inherently beneficial processes: the fact is that the primary aim of these programmes is producing surplus to sell to the international or urban markets and entails a variety of technical inputs which come as a package. Changes are gender specific in that they are mainly aimed at reaching "progressive farmers" who are often assumed to be only men with large assets;
- 2.2.4 Housework is a simple activity separate from production and concerned with immediate household consumption: yet much is aimed at the market. But women's participation is still not sufficient to improve women's condition;
- 2.2.5 Modernization programmes are based on a definition of the "household" that assumes convergent interests where benefits are shared equally by all members: there is a need to re-examine the concept of household, since the literature now shows that the impact of programmes and policies differs according to gender (Tadesse 1984:10).

There has been awareness generated during the last decade contrary to old assumptions. This awareness as Tadesse (1984:10) observes, is the key to understanding one major cause of rural poverty as well as the potential and limits of agricultural development in Africa. Furthermore, agriculture has always been the main form of production in Africa where on average 80% of the cash earnings are generated (Tadesse 1984:10).

Therefore to understand the poverty situation of women, it is also important to first look at the determinants of agricultural production and the division of labour by gender where a large section of women is employed.

A common theme in much of the literature is that "development" has had an adverse impact on women. The main thrust of this argument is advanced by Norris (1990:183) when stating that as development proceeds women's productivity tends to diminish, leading to further impoverishment.

In discussing this issue of unequal access to land which is a crucial factor in agricultural production, Jaquette (1990:61) maintains that as agriculture becomes less dependent upon human muscular power due to the introduction of sophisticated machinery, problems are also encountered. Although the difference in labour productivity between men and women might be expected to narrow, in reality it is the men who learn the new methods in handling new types of equipment. In the course of agricultural development men's labour productivity tends to increase while women's remains more or less static (Cock 1991:29).

It is important to note that in Africa, there was an element of gender oppression and poverty in pre-capitalist societies. However as Guy (1990:35) argues, the production of agricultural goods as had occurred around rural households was considerable and largely self-sufficient materially: Cattle and arable land played a pivotal role in production and these societies were founded upon the agricultural labour of women.

The organization and control of produce was largely in the hands of males. The main argument levelled by Guy (1990:35) is that wealth in pre-capitalist societies is not comparable to that of wealth in capitalist societies. The latter involved wealth based upon the accumulation of material possessions in monetary terms.

As summarized by Rogerson and Letsoalo (1981:348) the economic disadvantage and accompanying poverty situation could be said to have been used systematically to change the terms of trade at the disadvantage of the African cultivator. Therefore the conditions of poverty in the rural areas can be looked at in the light of a deliberate and demonstrable historical process of underdevelopment. Women as subordinates to men have suffered more during the process with no means at their disposal and bound by custom and tradition could not accelerate their own economic development.

As disadvantaged as they are women according to Jumani (1991:174) lack an organizational backing to address their plight. Whether it is in agricultural activities, small business, services, the role of women cannot be minimized and their poverty situation cannot be neglected (Girriapa 1986:223). They constitute part of the human population and have an equal contribution to make in every sphere of human development activity.

In terms of numbers, Engberg (1990:13) points out that poverty has contributed to malnutrition in most parts of Africa. Added to this, has been infant mortality rates where the number of countries with serious malnutrition problems was somewhat higher in Africa than in the Far East. In the 1980s, deterioration in child welfare had occurred in at least 18 countries in Latin America, 16 in Sub-Sahara Africa, 3 in North Africa and 4 in South and East Asia (Engberg 1990:13).

Of all the poor, the numbers affected and the severity of poverty points to women and children. Agarwal (1979:51) ascribes the poverty situation and much more the disadvantaged position of women partly to the following circumstances:

- exclusion from productivity: increasing machinery the introduction of which typically displaces women, who are rarely trained in its use and who thus remain confined to manual tasks;
- limited access to job opportunities due to lower levels of literacy and less interaction with the market place;
- lesser job mobility due to their primary and often sole responsibility for child care and the ideology of female seclusion.

As the World Bank (1990:83) states that the reduction of poverty needs the addressing and expanding of women's opportunities in ways that enhance their productivity as well as earning potential. This will in turn raise women's living standards and improved family welfare. Over time this will also help to reduce the incidents of poverty situations.

Poverty breeds demoralisation with the materially deprived often undermotivated. Meer (1990:27) points out that the position of the less privileged woman is that she becomes forced into wage labour and the sheer fact of this pressure demeans her as she also has the household to take care of. Women in rural areas do in fact become heads of households, scraping a few rands by weaving mats and baskets and selling fruit and vegetables.

It is in the endeavour that Lipman (1984:57) notes the sometimes unsuccessful attempts by rural women at vegetable growing as the soil is poor, water far away and inadequate. She must find other means of survival as the alternative is hunger and further poverty. Some women, tend to enter the labour market even less equipped than their male counterparts. They are driven to wage labour by poverty within their households. Their contribution to the household income makes a "difference" and the acceptance of a low wage is also underpinned by what they will tolerate given the need to survive back home.

The I.L.O. (1980 a:13) states that despite the fact that what is considered the men's or women's work outside of the household varies from country to country, less privileged women's economic tasks tend to have a lot in common. This is evident in their primary concentration in tasks related to reproduction and this has its own consequences. Women's involvement in the area of production is viewed as secondary to their reproductive activities hence the basis of their marginality and secondary role in production. The Environmental Development Agency (1985:22) attributes poverty situations to class divisions and inequalities.

Hadebe (1991:89) emphasizes the low levels of knowledge and poverty prevalent among rural women as sometimes leading to women suffering from a certain degree of inferiority complex. Some may even have lost hopes that they will ever improve their way of life and uplift their own and their families' standard of living. The continued poverty situation and peripheral position of women arises from what Nene (1981:17) terms the rigid role division which is cultural. But as culture is man-made it can be altered with a continued conscientization, re-education and re-socialisation of young and old alike.

Women live under increasingly heavy economic and social pressures. They are forced to take an active and economic role by poverty, yet they live in a society that does not recognise their attempts to fill that role. Outmoded ideas of the women's proper role and gender inequalities are obstacles they share with all women forced into a position of subservience (Nene 1981:153).

## 2.3 URBAN BIAS

Closely related to the previous section on rural poverty is urban bias which is to the detriment of rural areas and more so on women. The situation of the uniqueness of women's situation should not be underestimated. Of relevance such uniqueness is according to Dewar (1985:1) the damage poverty inflicts upon individuals who must endure it as being a manifestation of great inequality between rural development and urban development.

There is also the fact that poverty itself and underdevelopment are symptomatic of a deeper malaise. For it is often the consequence of a process which simultaneously produces a better quality of life for some whilst impoverishing others.

Dewar (1985:1) sees the problem as a situation whereby in development programmes, international rhetoric has greatly influenced Africa's strategies, thus having very limited success relative to the scale of the problem. In South Africa, Dewar (1985:1) notes that peripheral rural regions have had those sectors of the population which have experienced an increase in income and have partly done so primarily as a result of increases in wages in the mining and industrial sectors. Both historically and in a political sense, the reasons for the dependency to the core regions partly lied in the decisions of government giving preference to urban development on one hand and rural neglect on the other hand (Dewar 1985:1).

The uneven spatial development has according to Fair (1992:51) given dynamic expressions in rural-urban migration both temporary and permanent. Although Fair (1992:51) notes rural-urban inequalities in a development context, he emphasizes the fact that this is not the only imbalance leading to poverty. In providing another dimension for broad regional inequalities, Fair (1990:2) analyses manifestations of spatial inequality which are matched by structural inequalities between groups of people.

Given this fact therefore, inequalities are also found within rural areas and within urban areas and these may be more serious and of greater concern than rural-urban differences in general. On the one hand there are poorer groups - the poor farmer and subsistence producers who constitute the vast majority of the population and those both urban and rural who try to eke out a living in the informal sector or are unemployed. On the other hand there are the more fortunate groups - the more prosperous progressive farmers and workers in full time jobs and the self-employed in the formal or modern wage-paying sector.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Fair (1992:52) observes that throughout the region, rural people have had to manage their plight on their own. This refers to ecological reasons such as drought which had ravaged many countries during the 1980s further reducing the capacity of the rural areas to sustain their populations. This has compounded the rural areas' problems as they have been the most underdeveloped areas compared to the urban areas.

Political factors cited by Fair (1992:52) include the deliberate neglect of rural areas by governments so that despite the rhetoric, priority has not been given to rural and agricultural development. Objectives have in fact, been urban biased and in many cases, administration has been urban-centred and over centralized and there has been a lack of political will towards improving conditions in rural areas.

Radical opinion as Fair (1992:52) notes, goes further and lays the blame for the inequalities both between rural and urban areas and within these areas on the attitudes and activities of elite bourgeoisies and bureaucracies which in league with international capitalism, have become a class promoting its own ends at the expense of the rural and the urban masses. Fair (1992:53) has noted that a number of governments such as those of Tanzania and Nigeria seem to have got the message and are paying attention to an area of their economies that they seriously neglected in the past.

Other evidence of rural-urban interaction other than the rural drain cited by Fair (1992:54) comes from the role of the small town and service centres in rural development. Experiences in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Botswana, for example support the view that "urbanization" should promote rural development and rural development should back up urban development. This is well balanced development.

Having noted Fair's contribution to unequal regional development to the benefit of urban areas, in South Africa little income per capita growth occurred in the 1980s, and on the whole such growth has not contained the excessive rural-urban drift. This has been due to the opportunities that urban areas present to individuals compared to rural areas.

In a recent study by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) the bank depicts the extent of imbalances in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal, with up to 75% of the people in remote rural areas receiving no income (The Sunday Times. 1994 : 20 March : 12). The statistics by the bank further reflect that 75% of the women have no income.

The situation indicates the role played by rural neglect and quantifies the extent of poverty in these areas. The issues of urban bias have according to Mathe (1989:7) been disruptive on traditional societies by displacing existing occupations, shifting production from home and rural areas, fostering social mobility and introducing monetary relations.

Change in terms of development has occurred in the rural areas but it has been slow and not properly balanced. Hence large numbers of people still move from rural areas and farms to marginally better areas or rural towns partly because their rural villages are beset by underdevelopment (Mathe 1989:7). Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique and Zimbabwe have had large numbers of rural people drifting to the urban centres including South Africa for "better" opportunities.

Perhaps in South Africa the advent of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) will be accompanied by a dramatic turn of events. The RDP soon after the 1994 nation wide election was publicized as national policy by government and set out a number of goals to be achieved by the government itself together with community development agencies, the business sector and labour. The National Rural Development Forum -(NRDF -1994:1) states that the RDP takes into it was account the community's own structures, skills, technology and expertise and in reality this ought to be the starting point of any development initiative. This would in future address the imbalances between the rural and urban areas, imbalances that have contributed to a further marginalisation of women.

The NRDF (1994:3) sets out some of the goals of development relevant to women in the following areas: Land Reform, Public Works, Water and Sanitation, Education, Agriculture, Social Security and Welfare, Health Care and Nutrition.

This according to the NRDF (1994:3) is a means of moving away from the past top-down strategies as well as urban biased development and is geared towards all communities affected by underdevelopment. It also gives the rural women an opportunity to be active participants in rural development aimed at making rural life a better way of life.

## 2.4 MIGRANCY

Marked regional disparities as noted above have contributed to the poverty situation now prevalent in most rural parts of Africa. It has been the men who took the lead in leaving the countryside for urban centres in search of employment opportunities. Women have remained behind to take care of their households with little or no

resources to make ends meet. Although this has been the trend, women also have been noted as forming part of the migrant labour force due to circumstances beyond their control.

Throughout the Third World, Charlton (1984:153) observes that the proportion of migrants that is female varies considerably with both the country of origin and the country of destination. The most common feature, although there are variations is that female migration is perpetuated by low economic levels experienced by women. Women have been recorded as migrants in West African countries such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast and in the latter case, women constituted 38% of the migrants in 1975 (Charlton 1984:154).

Driven by economic necessity, the female migrant who moves inside her own country is disadvantaged both by her migratory status and by being female. For female international migrants, Charlton (1984:154) argues that there are qualitative as well as quantitative differences between their status and that of the host country nationals. In addition to the problems of migratory status and being female these women face major cultural, linguistic and citizenship difficulties. The migrant women view the process as presenting a "better way of life" but it would be a mistake to assume that migration does not present its own problems for many women. In a study on Ugandan migrants, Charlton (1984:155) concluded that the women in the study were "tired of rural life"; being unpaid labourers on the farms. However, the assimilation into a new way of life presented more problems than the opportunities envisaged.

The migrant labour system is an issue that goes for most parts of Southern Africa as well. The ANC (1994:75) states that with special reference to South Africa unequal development by region has ensured a migratory labour supply to the mines. This has mainly taken the form of movement from rural areas or the then homelands to urban areas.

The migrant labour system has long been recognised as one of the key institutions in the development of a "modern" South Africa: a source of immense profits for a few and immense hardships for many especially women in the rural areas. The role and status of women have become a complex issue under such circumstances and has opened up opportunities for increased personal autonomy and mobility at an individual level. However, this has radically undermined the economic security that ought to go with such autonomy. Walker (1990:169) states that in the early 1970s the origins of the migrant labour system lay in the functions it served for capital although the system dates to earlier days. To achieve its primary position of wealth, strength and power, South Africa continuously drew and required a constant supply of cheap labour within itself and neighbouring countries.



The migratory labour system has been dependant upon the exploitation of the labourer - through wages - and the women. At first Dewar (1985:15) notes that it was the young men who were forced out of the rural areas. The requirements and extent differed in specific situations and women were not allowed by the state to enter urban areas. The general tendency through the women's poverty situation was to "break the law" and leave the rural areas.

Cobbe (1982:839) provides the following factors as contributing to the flow of migrants to the cities:

- land taxes that placed restrictions on economic activities of indigenous people implied over time that migrant labour was the only attractive way to satisfy subsistence needs for the families;
- profit maximisation by employers who sought to minimize labour costs by expanding the rural areas as recruitment centres where labour could be obtained at very low costs.

The institution of oscillating migrant labour also has had profoundly negative influences on rural productivity. Perhaps the most pervasive is its attitudinal impact on rural life: the fact that the migrant labour system offers better life chances for individuals than rural agriculture, acts as a strong disincentive to making a serious commitment to agriculture. Many rural people see migrant labour as a life time prospect, as the other alternative is unemployment. Beneath this general attitudinal umbrella, the system of migrant labour negatively affects rural productivity.

Dewar (1985:15) outlines these negative influences as follows:

Firstly the system is a self perpetuating one. Because migrancy is seen as a more attractive option than farming, migrant remittances tend to be spent on the migration process rather than being invested in agriculture.

Secondly, the pattern of migrant remittances is based largely on need: if families are hungry or school fees are needed, money is sent back home. This pattern however, is a strong disincentive in increasing rural productivity. Often female family members who are primarily responsible for agricultural production while the men are away, fear that if they produce a surplus - an event which may not be repeatable in the following year - the remittances will decline.

Thirdly, while migrant remittances are the major source of potentially investible resource to most rural households, these are not predictably available. This particularly, is important in the case of cropping, where the timing of investment - in planting, in fertilizer, in insecticides - is used.

Fourthly and of critical importance, the migrant labour system attracts the younger and more vigorous family members, agriculture is left primarily to the women, the very young and the aged. Population growth rates in these areas remain extremely high. Lastly, since migrant jobs are difficult to secure it is therefore often too risky for a migrant to spend his money investing in agriculture as opposed to investing it in the job seeking process for example, on transportation, accommodation in the metropolitan area. Significantly, the institution is strongly interrelated to the problem of landlessness and overcrowding.

Migration to towns is according to Dewar (1985:16) not only permanent, it is also circulatory with people going back and forth between country and town, sending or taking back to their rural homes part of the cash earned or goods bought. Nor is migration necessarily rural to urban, it can also be from rural to rural such as the movement from poorer to richer agricultural areas or the movement of migrant workers to large commercial farms.

This has influenced the demographic shift that has left women in positions of financial responsibility for their households. To these issues outlined above, Fair (1990:2) emphasises the importance of not placing too rigid a definition on rural to urban migration as the only element in national economies of countries as there tends to be a considerable interaction between the two.

One of the detrimental effects as noted above is the development of dependency on cash from wages or remittances by those left behind, which tends to discourage self-sufficiency in food production. Furthermore, growing and deepening destitution have tended to weaken the ability of the extended family to take in and provide for deserted, divorced or widowed women. Hence some of the women who find themselves victims of these trends tend to turn to petty trading (I.L.O. 1980 b:151). Paradoxically, some rural households who have little or no earnings outside their home areas, experience a lack of resources for agricultural production. Consequently there also appears to be wide-spread agreement that migration is to be explained in terms of economic factors. These include a stagnating subsistence agriculture and relatively high urban wages.

Although women back home have the potential to be as productive or more so than men when they are forced to farm alone, they are generally disadvantaged by overwork and insufficient access to whatever help is available from private and public agencies (Charlton 1984:154). Since the role of women in agriculture is now receiving attention, it follows that people who are concerned with food production and rural development must direct their policies specifically to those women who are farming also because the men have migrated.

## 2.5 GENDER INEQUALITIES - AN INTERPRETATION

Bazilli (1971:7) addresses the issue of gender inequalities from a perspective of putting gender as a priority in development initiatives. Bazilli identifies specific elements contributing to gender oppression and inequality by attaching importance to the recognition of the rights of women. To this regard, gender relations involve the need to raise relations of power and gender itself as an integral part of all forms of power. This reflects itself in most parts of Africa by the differential impact on men and women of economic policies and economic power.

In turn the economic advantage placed on men has granted them the economic power to decide and eventually control all the economic benefits, hence the pronounced patriarchal tendencies. Zama (1991:57) analyses the situation of women in terms of the development of a society. It has been noted as a sad fact that one of the most demeaning issues on women's underdevelopment has been well established institutions such as patriarchy.

The experience of patriarchal power relations is according to Zama (1991:57) impacting differently on different women depending on their social locations. The inequalities as evidenced even presently, especially the oppression of women are not a natural phenomenon, rather this is something that came about as society passed through stages of development. Mabandla (1991:77) argues that it is now fairly well documented that what is applied in many African countries as customary law is neither customary nor law. There has been a shift from custom to customary law which took place most prominently in the family sphere during the colonial periods. The process consistently involved an alliance between the colonial administration and African male elders (Mabandla 1991:77). The latter, as the traditional holders of power over strategic resources such as land, cattle, women and children saw this power dissolving and fought to regain it by manipulating institutions such as guardianship and lobola.

The colonial administration for its part, either misunderstood the nature of African institutions or held a view of African society which saw women as rightless entities under the authority of men.

Although we often choose to deny it or attempt to explain gender oppression by what is daily becoming increasingly meaningless platitudes, Nattrass (1980:7) argues that all those concerned with gender issues are very well aware that women live in an extremely unequal and unjust society in Africa.

In confirming Nattrass' views, Simons (1986:9) blames the same customary law and points out that the African customary law has been poorly adapted to the changes in social conditions and more importantly, human relations. In providing an overview of women's roles and status, Brydon and Chant (1989:1) refer to roles as the manifold activities carried out by women in general, for example, child care, housework, subsistence farming, health care and unremunerated labour. By status the authors refer to the value and meaning given to these activities by wider society, which in turn reflect and influence the general rubric of gender relations.

The issue of culture and social environment in which men and women grow up is probably the determining factor affecting the attitudes regarding women both at home and at work. This fact is outlined by Prekel (1986:27) and deserves the serious attention of all men and women concerned, since much misunderstanding exists regarding the changing role of men and women.

One of the problems that Prekel (1986:27) terms environmental problems is the inhuman load that the dual roles at work and at home place on a woman. Within a society in which men have been controlling the economy and were the dominant force in political organizations, women have always been viewed as mere appendages of men and they were therefore assigned the role of maintaining the home as wives and as mothers. They could not enter into contracts or sue without the aid of a male guardian (Nomvete 1984:59).

Not all societies have valued equality over other principles of justice even at the rhetorical level. Given its widespread appeal, the frequency with which the equality principles are indicated is striking and although women's equality has become a major issue in the last quarter of the twentieth century, norms and practices have proven resistant to change.

In theory as Jaquette (1990:5) observes, modernization should re-inforce equality by establishing a gender free division of labour, a set of gender free standards of achievement and gender free institutions. Instead patriarchy tended to be a norm and modernization has failed to eliminate gender oppression. The equality claim is an ethical one and this has been especially true for women, as when the point is made that women's moral qualities must be preserved for the good of society. Change is necessary.

As Collier (1988:10) argues, women may be especially vulnerable to unanticipated changes, and if this occurs, the burden of adjustment costs should not, on equity grounds be borne by the already disadvantaged woman. This goes both for social and economic changes. With respect to the latter women have been viewed as the invisible farmers of African agriculture because their labour contribution to farming is often overlooked in national statistics and development plans (Lewis 1984:170).

Planners too often see these women as farmer's wives, as house workers rather than farmers. This is the negative impact of national development policies on women.

Kandiyoti (1990:8) maintains that gender inequalities are also reflected in development projects. These projects when they do involve women, tend to be scattered, small and peripheral to the main thrust of planning processes of development programmes in general. Different agencies, both national and international have financed a plethora of projects in various sectors with little co-ordination nor concern for sustained financial viability, capacity to grow and expand or even replicability. This then places women's position within society to even worse conditions by widening the inequality gap.

At the present moment, we are still faced with a society that is male dominated. This has given to debates in literature revolving around the question as to whether anywhere in the world, any societies have existed in which women were completely equal to men.

Households themselves differ in their gender endowment. This can be expected to generate differences in assets, labour and access to public services. The consequences of gender differences may be more or less pronounced when the head of the household is female. Hence gender inequalities become important in analysing women's issues according to problems rather than processes.

Mullings (1976:240) provides a categorical distinction between equality and symmetry. To this, Mullings attaches an Engels' perspective where equality derives from all members of society having the same access to means of production. Inequality in this context, occurs when resources are appropriated by a particular strata as private property. From a historical point of view, women have been excluded from social production and thus from full participation in society. From the above, inequality would therefore refer to differential access and rights to the means of production or resources in society.

This distinction according to Mullings (1976:240) provides a framework for examining societies in which the relationship between men and women may be equal but asymmetrical: the distribution of resources may be egalitarian, with surplus redistributed rather than used for personal ends, but a group of males retain the formal control over the distribution. Asymmetry may, under certain circumstances constitute the basis for the development of inequality.

Mitchell (1975:2) notes that equal rights are an important tip of an iceberg that goes far deeper, that they are only a tip of an iceberg is both a reflection of the limitation of the concept of equality and an indication of how profound and fundamental is the problem of the oppression of women. It has further been suggested by Pankhurst (1988:1) that in Africa there is a crisis of social reproduction. Put simply, this is observable in the numbers of people who are no longer able to survive without outside assistance.

Women develop a dependency relationship to men, thus creating an increasing polarisation struggle between women and men within households. Robertson (1988:440) re-iterates the fact that socio-economic differentiation varies radically from place to place in Africa but it is clear that gender stratification was an important part of it. This is basic to understanding women's problems. Although this has been noted by many authors, Marshall (1985:215) maintains that perspectives on gender inequalities and development have not devoted extensive attention to the issue of women's status.

Even at present, a lot is being said about gender inequalities but still, women's disadvantaged position in economic, social and political terms have been recorded. Their status is still not equal to that of related men. The views that were put forward by Hay and Stichter (1984:1) to the effect that the social constraints which shaped a woman's economic and domestic work in the pre-colonial period, still hold. There seems to be autonomy granted to women on the one hand, and poverty as well as overwork on the other (Guyer 1984:19).

If in Africa an equality claim achieves standing, then what is sometimes termed boundary issues must also be taken into account. All human beings can be declared equal, but what institutions are then responsible for making this rule stick and for what population? The government is the most obvious institution to carry out the challenge of making sure that individuals enjoy equality, but this is only one institution.

Non-governmental institutions may also be as important as laws in the allocation and re-allocation of social norms, influencing markets, even when the government is the ultimate arbiter.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an attempt was made to link the causes of rural poverty specifically its negative impact on women to the effects of urban biased development. Added to these, broader issues affecting women with special reference to those heading households, were outlined for example, migration.

Generally, women in Africa have been oppressed and compounding their problems are their low levels of literacy. This means that women have been stripped of those things widely considered to be basic human rights throughout the world. Patriarchy has reinforced their low status, hence the diminishing rewards on the part of the woman both in structural legal and economic benefits within household and society resources. Where agriculture in the rural areas could have been another source of livelihood, the women have had no access to land - there has existed an unequal distribution of resources.

The issue of gender inequalities hinged on the social environment in which men and women grow up. Reference was made to the dual roles at work and at home placed on women as well as the society in which men have controlled their economic activities and have been a dominant force.

With poverty having reached alarming rates in rural areas of Africa, this is still a cause of concern in women's position. Finally the analysis implies that policies and programmes aiming at eliminating the subordination of women are bound to be incomplete unless they focus on the household level, that is the role of women and men within the domestic arena.

# CHAPTER 3

## WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

### EFFORTS: LIMITATIONS IMPOSED

### BY PREJUDICE AND BIAS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The issues and historical background as outlined in the previous chapter have been witnessed by women in Africa and Third World societies at large. Most women in the rural environment live in societies with strong biases toward male superiority. In addition to unequal access to resources, numerous societies in Africa have restricted women from attaining equal status with men. Cultural restrictions that have kept women subordinate have also been observed.

James (1995:7) adds that the marginal role of women has also been perpetuated by illiteracy, overwork and prejudice promoted by development projects. Even more alarming, is the fact that women are poverty stricken and have no decision making powers to alleviate their conditions. As a result it has become virtually impossible for them to escape the cycle of subordination in which they are entrenched.

Inequalities, blatant or subtle still characterize the position of women in societies despite the strides made towards improving their status (Unesco 1975:9). The fact that education has often not only been irrelevant to development needs and has also failed to prepare women for participation in the development process, compounds the problem. Negative attitudes on the part of men have formed the greatest barrier to equality of women's educational opportunity.

These are constraints that Sibiya (1990:6) terms man-made barriers that inhibit innovation and a resistance to utilising all manpower. At the same time, Qunta (1987:68) states that women have been denied the capacity and other pre-requisites for effecting structural changes in their societies. They have been working within a given ideological framework which they could not challenge.

To this regard patriarchy has also acted as a limitation to women's upliftment of their quality of life. External factors such as those imposed by colonial domination over an indigenous African culture have also played a part in women's problem. Western based development strategies and international forces in economic terms ensured a process of underdevelopment in the Third World as a whole, placing women in a more vulnerable position.



Ravenhill (1986:3) warns against the danger of focusing entirely on external factors as inhibitors of women's development efforts. This is in line with the assumptions that Africa's problems will be resolved as soon as the world economy recovers.

Improving opportunities for women therefore, is not only a matter of human justice, but also a sure route to faster and more sustainable development. Most people recognize that women have the right to participate in political and economic decision-making and to enjoy the fruits of social and economic progress (World Bank 1994:v). But in much of the world, they have not had the opportunity to do so.

### 3.2 RURAL WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Before looking at what society expects of women, it is enlightening to look at how women themselves perform their roles in society. Their roles have been based on the traditional concept of the wife and the assumption that she is an ordinary adjunct of her husband and his family. However, Mfono (1989:10) is of the view that divorce and single motherhood have been on the increase, thus making society as a whole a non-static one.

In addition to her educational role in relation to the child, the wise mother keeps communications open between herself and teachers, priests and other professionals that the child has contact with. Added to the women's frequently precarious financial circumstances, they have to deal with matters like determining how to manage relations in their personal lives. Besides being a member of organizations which have a mutually supportive role, she is also involved in community work (Mfono 1989:10). She is in essence the family's anchor into the larger community.

One of the most crucial non-material elements of uplifting the living standards of rural communities is to involve women in decisions affecting them. This should be coupled by women's participation in strategies which are designed to render benefits of various forms to them for example, economic benefits. The most hindering factor acting against the most important goal if not a final goal of rural development is equity in the distribution of resources and assets. Trollip (1981:17) maintains that while equity does not imply that everybody's income should be equal, an equitable distribution of resources and assets within households does imply that there is an equality of opportunity. Furthermore, once an equitable distribution of resources has occurred, inequalities will be somewhat lessened.

In most African societies, the key measure of a man's wealth was the number of dependants in his household. A man's ability to make decisions, expand control over land and his production of food and livestock depended crucially on the number of dependent men in his household. Also, the number of women farmers whose agricultural and domestic labour he could easily mobilize, counted. This Preston-Whyte (1988:59) notes as the superiority that has been afforded to men in decision-making regardless of any other factors such as relative age and status in the household.

In the division of labour within the extended family household structure as well, the household head-usually the men - sometimes in conjunction with the lineage head or clan chief, controlled other economic resources such as agricultural tools or cattle. He also allocated food fields to his wives, instructed them on whom to feed and sometimes required that a portion of the harvest go into his personal granary. This further reflects the lack of any form of decision making power on the part of the women.

In a study conducted by Claude (1989:221) among women in rice growing projects in the Cameroon, it was revealed that:

- i. women were conscious that they represented an investment of a substantial sum of money to their husbands;
- ii. their husbands gained the right to mobilize their labour and appropriated their income.

What continued to be a surprise although this subordination of women continued, they still accepted work on the rice farms under such conditions. In this instance, it can be argued that some women have accepted the status quo and challenging it would be opposed to societal values and norms.

In outlining barriers to effective development by women the World Bank (1994:34) points out that despite women's important role as agricultural workers - whether as family or hired labourers - their access to extension services has not equalled that of male farmers. Women are also underrepresented as extension agents even in regions with a long tradition of female farming, such as Africa. Only 11% of the extension staff and 7% of the field extension staff are women. Also in several African countries,

male farmers have greater contact with the extension services than do female farmers. Evidence from Malawi, Burkina Faso, Zambia also shows that extension advice to one member of a household frequently is not passed on to the person who carries out the task. Decisions are made by men (World Bank 1994:35).

Chapman (1976:11) states that the need to secure equal rights for women has developed historically along four major fronts: political, social, educational and economic. Perhaps the most critical as Chapman argues, is the economic arena. To the extent that women cannot control their own economic fates or influence the major policy decisions which affect them, they are incapable of changing their status and the conditions of economic dependence under which most of them live. It has been impossible for women to achieve adequate political representation without first achieving economic independence and a significant level of economic influence. Political and economic clout are closely intertwined (Chapman 1976:11).

One of the important functions of humane government policy in addressing women's problems is to correct major imbalances that occur in all spheres of women's lives. This is so especially when women cannot make decisions of whatever nature and economic activity rewards some people much more than others (Ross 1976:137).

According to Bell (1976:239) references to the increasing number of women in the labour force are abundant these days, and more and more attention has been focused on the growing number of married women and married mothers who work in paid jobs. Yet, little analysis has been devoted to the impact of these women's employment on their household's income. The economic analysis which does exist has been directed to the occupational distribution of the new group of working women, and to various measures of occupational and income differences which might indicate economic discrimination. However, Bell (1976:239) argues that very few calculations exist on the distribution thereof within the household. Men have controlled women's income as "heads" of households, confirming the powerlessness of women in this area.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - OECD (1975:66) traces women's minimal role in decision making to the belief that "a woman's place is in the home". The problem of achieving equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere is related to the social view that a woman's first responsibility is to her home. This social view finds its full expression in the division of roles and responsibilities in the household and society - a division that is far from equal between husband and wife.

Government policy should not only assume that the involvement of women in production is necessary for rural development. It also has to emphasise that involvement in production is of the utmost importance to the women themselves as a pre-condition for improvement in their position in society. The former view has been largely withheld by men. Hence Croll (1979:4) points out that this will further predict a direct correlation between participation in social production and women's degree of control over economic resources as well as surplus. This will also enable women on the basis of their improved material conditions to acquire new confidence, power and authority within the public and domestic sphere of society.

In discussing African women in society and culture, White (1984:53) observes that it has been a long standing rule that a woman passes at marriage from authority of her father to that of her husband where the latter's authority as such will not be challenged. Neither the wife nor anyone else disputes important decisions with regard to the home and the upbringing of the children, the betrothing of daughters and sons. All these rest with him and him alone (White 1984:53). These are some of the solid foundations of women's disadvantaged decision making positions.

Papa (1989:223) states that whether it is on agricultural activities, industry, social, small business, the role of women should not be minimized. Furthermore their role in decision making and changing the structure of development to their advantage should also be taken into account.

Many women in rural communities lack the self-confidence to participate in more direct ways in the process of development partly due to the above barriers. Strategies must therefore be found, and methods employed that will help such women to build their self-confidence, enhance their self-esteem and sense of worth, and motivate them to actively participate in the process (Ellis 1987:133). At the same time, men ought to be educated as well on the role and contribution of women in all spheres of life. This would in time allow some degree of attitudinal changes towards women's responsibilities. Hence the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD (1975:24) contends that women's liberation from dependency and poverty in general requires the incorporation of equity in all the problems facing women.

### 3.3 THE LEVEL OF LITERACY, EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS LIMITATION

In most African nations, the majority of economically active women work in agriculture. Stichter (1984:193) argues that a major reason for the difficulties African women face in many spheres of economic life including the labour market is their relative lack of access to education. Of all the world areas, Africa has one of the highest levels of illiteracy - in 1970 about 80% of the women were illiterate compared to 60% of the men.

The West African countries of Ghana and Cameroon, and the Eastern African country of Zambia, have relatively high percentages of women who are literate or who are enrolled in school and yet even in these cases, less than half of the female population is enrolled in school, whereas about half the male population is (Stichter 1984:193).

Botswana, an exporter of both male and female labour to South Africa has relatively fewer people who are literate or in school, but as Stichter (1984:193) observes, the percentages are not equal for women and men. At the other extreme is the Sudan, where the difference between male and female attainments is quite wide, although Ghana, Tanzania and Mozambique also have rather wide gender differentials in literacy, as measured by the ratio of female to male rates. As for absolute levels of female literacy, Botswana, Mozambique, and the Ivory Coast are at the low end of the scale, primarily due to the poor development of educational systems there during the colonial era (Stichter 1984:194).

The percentage of African women who have completed secondary school is much lower than the percentage enrolled in school, pointing to drop-out rates among women. In Kenya according to the 1969 census, only 1.2 percent of women had completed secondary school, compared to 3.8 percent of the men. In Tanzania in 1967, the percentage were 0.4 percent of the women, compared to 2.7 percent of the men (Stichter 1984:194). In general, the rates of secondary school attainment in Africa seems lower than those in other developing regions such as Asia and Latin America.

Full participation of rural women in the development process partly depends on their ability to recognise and use their skills and capabilities for their own development and that of their communities. Women themselves must be able to develop, improve and use their skills to identify and analyse their own situations and problems, and to plan, implement and evaluate action programmes that will provide solutions to some of the problems. However, many not only lack the skills but also the initiative to participate in more direct ways in the process of development (Ellis 1987:133).

Any nation's progress towards progress and prosperity will only remain a dream, it's aspirations unfulfilled and unrealised, till women actively participate in all the developmental activities of that country. To emphasize the importance of women's education in this context is to emphasize the obvious (Sharma 1988:1).

Even as a housewife, an educated and enlightened mother can significantly assist in reducing the incidence of illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and ill health of youngsters. But her roles transcend the frontiers of her immediate surroundings.

Education being an instrument for social change can be used as an agent to bring a change in status of women. The planning could be done in such a way that the accumulated distortion regarding the status of women in the past could be neutralised. The removal of women's illiteracy will not only help in universal enrolment and retention of children in the age group of 6 - 14, but also will help in the preservation of the talents of women (Sharma 1988:1).

Illiteracy rates among rural women are higher than their urban counterparts and their enrolment and particularly their retention is very difficult because of the poverty and illiteracy of parents, social barriers and non-availability of adequate educational facilities. Due to these problems they tend to drop out from the system. The education planning for rural areas is also insufficient and unable to contribute much towards women's equality.

Bola-Odu (1981:52) argues that to aid the formulation of effective development programmes, adult educators and planners must seek to understand why most women in the rural areas are illiterate and further lagging behind men in economic progress. Socially, women have not been given due consideration in affairs of the home and their voices usually unheard in the political arena. The cultural arena has been a handicap (Bola-Odu 1981:52).

There has been also a complete lack of knowledge as to what resources women could use economically; what protection the family needs against diseases; what types of food are appropriate; what type of management is required in running a home and so on. The heart of the problem has lied in tradition. Custom and family pressure have been influences which have been detrimental to the progress of women or "the missing half".

The lack of education on the part of women has also been due to the assumption that rural people are burdened with their daily activities for survival that they may not have much "leisure time" to bother about any form of education and training (Bola-Odu 1981:56). The women in rural Africa are illiterate and their illiteracy is a typical manifestation of the "culture of silence" directly related to underdeveloped societies. Hence the notion of just giving rural people some form of literacy training may not be the solution to the problem.

Women feel powerless as a result of social, economical and psychological forces: these being problems of fatigue from hard labour, poverty, repeated child births, malnutrition, poor health standards and lack of medical services and coping with family and community problems.

Literacy is a determining factor in the development process of any population. Development and progress are not possible without first eradicating or reducing illiteracy because literacy has a direct bearing on employment, life expectancy of people and a decrease in population growth rates (Kotze 1994:26). Literacy as a skill can therefore be said to be a foundation of other lifeskills. It should be viewed not only as the position of reading and writing skills but to prepare individuals for longer and more crucial roles within their disadvantaged communities (Kotze 1994:26).

The opportunities for women to improve their own positions in the market place have been hampered by the difficulty of acquiring skills training. Training programmes have always been made available to men than to women (Davies 1975:20). Tinker (1990:18) discusses the above issues from a human capital investment point of view. Human capital investment in subsistence economies which characterize most of African societies consists of training of the young generation in the necessary technical skills and transmission of traditional cultural features including knowledge of and respect for existing hierarchical order relating to age and gender.

From a young age children are socialized to accept their present and future roles, not only without protest, but also without resentment (Tinker 1990:18). Boys learn to fight, girls to obey. In the use of improved techniques, this has been usually monopolized by the men, economic development gradually created a widening gap between the skills levels of men and women. Boys got systematic training as apprentices in family enterprises, while girls continued to be taught only simple household and agricultural operations by their mothers.

Tinker (1990:19) further observed that when large-scale enterprises appear, male craftsmen and apprentices get recruited for skilled and more challenging activities while women are excluded from learning anything other than routine skills in simple operations. By denying women access to education and training, men prevent them from getting better incomes and more challenging jobs. Much discrimination in advancement is made inevitable by the traditional gender discrimination in training (Tinker 1990:19).

With rural women in mind, on-going community-based training is a necessity (Reynolds 1981:149). Within this on-going educational process a wide variety of topics relevant to the needs of community members at large have to be identified and covered. It is the role of the women themselves to decide on the content and form as well as the duration of training. Although this might call on some occasions to use outside resources as in personnel, the majority of the training ought to be carried out by persons belonging to those communities who understand their environments and their needs.

The influence of educating and training women on all aspects of women's roles has been referred to in most literature and this reflects the importance of more emphasis to be laid on the relevance that education and training has for women's and family-related issues (Kahne 1976:55).

Too often women have been dictated to in determining who they are, what they will do, how they will speak and act. In this manner, women's lives have been ignored, devalued, and diminished throughout the centuries (Rannells 1990:63). An empowering experience is one in which a woman gains an increased sense of power and autonomy.

Empowerment represents a new understanding of her power. One area of our lives where empowerment can occur is in learning experiences. These are events, happenings, activities in which we acquire a skill knowledge and/or attitudes. Classes, courses, workshops, reading, discussing, writing, viewing, hearing - all are potential learning experiences. These learning experiences can be designed in many ways that include different topics, activities and possibilities for learning that accommodate women's interests and needs. This will counteract the heritage of disempowerment and silence that women have lived.

### 3.4 PATRIARCHY AS LIMITATION

It could be said that men generally have perceived and still perceive women to be potentially powerful, hence their often defensive attitude towards efforts to emancipate them. Women, on the other hand do not seem to be aware of their potential for power. They bring up children and have the power to influence the future generation's attitudes towards women. Women have great strength particularly in rural areas where as a result of male migration there are more women than men.

Women in Africa share similar problems in that as diverse as their societies appear to be, the region itself has been shaped by colonialism and capitalism in recent times. All women have felt the impact of changes in the law, economic depression, and migrant labour. This impact has however, varied from one region to the other (Gaitskell 1983:1).

Simons (1986:9) shows that the disabilities imposed by customary law have been a greater obstacle to the growth of free and mature personalities. Added to this patriarchal attitudes have also taken a heavy toll on women's development progress. This view is re-enforced by Parpart (1989:7) when noting that women's weak economic status and political power have been exacerbated by patriarchal cultures that have been in turn promoted by western-gender stereotypes with strongly entrenched traditions of male privilege.

Although women have as much to contribute to development as men, certain age-old traditions and family pressures have tended to hold them back (Russel 1989:341).

Unfortunately as noted in most literature, the mens privileged position has often been a crippling one which has undermined women's autonomy and creativity. Women have the time and capability to engage not only in welfare-type of activities but it is just that society expects them to be home-minders first.



Having gone through the same experiences, women in South Africa gradually became more aware of the need to break patriarchal barriers and strive for economic and political freedom (Nomvete 1984:60). Large numbers are sole bread winners employed on farms and factories and traditional practices as well as conventions which are obsolete have been inhibiting factors towards progress that have been challenged by women. Hence women themselves have taken it as their task to fight for equal rights with men and the removal of all laws and customs that deny women such equal rights.

For women as for men, the ability to realize their economic potential depends both on their human capital. Compared with men, however women have faced additional and more intractable barriers because of their mothering role and because of cultural traditions sometimes reflected in law or policy, that tend to keep women more home-bound than men and more restricted choices in economic terms and social interactions. These barriers are worse in situations of extreme poverty.

### 3.5 RURAL WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT

The economic activities of African women have been undergoing fundamental changes in the course of capitalist development throughout the continent. With very low or even non-existent literacy levels, they have endeavoured to make ends meet. As noted in Chapter 2, changes occurred when the indigenous economies in which African women engaged in subsistence production were disrupted and the indigenous non-capitalist mode of production was limited to an externally imposed capitalist mode of production by means of the migrant labour system. Various factors militating against the employment of women have taken different forms (I.L.O. 1969:11).

Subsistence agricultural activities have been the major form of employment for most women. The other sectors where women have been involved in, include areas incorporating women with little or no formal education usually in city centres. Lack of general education; vocational training, appropriate openings for employment, traditions and attitudes of men - including family members, have all contributed to the unequal access to employment opportunities in Africa today.

That education is a basic investment is confirmed by Darling (1975:40) as the very complexity and rapidity of technological and social changes requiring a comprehensive imparting of skills. Driven by economic necessity and extreme poverty, women have tended to disregard traditional norms and expectations in the pursuit of a better way of life. In extreme circumstances, young girls of school-going age take up the responsibility to assist in bringing some income home. There is evidence of the use of child labour in most parts of Africa, for example in large carpet factories of Morocco (Rogers and Standing 1981:7).

More women are still confined to low pay, routine work and poor prospects and this is made more problematic by the fact that in reality there are two labour markets throughout the world: one for men and one for women, with a very small overlap area between them. It is also well known that the customary women's jobs, with very few exceptions, are to be found at the bottom of the pile.

### 3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the main focus was that of prejudice and bias towards women in the rural areas. Cultural problems, low levels of education, lack of skills and restrictions on their economic development have all impacted differently on women and men in Africa.

More thought needs to be given to particular forms of integrating women in development along women's specific goals as opposed to male - defined terms. Women's education and training ought to be carried out in ways that promote a degree of match between the individual, that is the woman and her environment. This will ensure that the environment itself fits more closely to the specific needs and values of the person.

In sum, although the specific economic, and social rights of women in African societies have been increasingly acknowledged, the constraints on their ability to control their own lives have been apparent.

# CHAPTER 4

## RURAL WOMEN AND HOUSEHOLD

### DYNAMICS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Economic deprivation has for years in South Africa been partly responsible for the creation of a base for the instability now engulfing the country. There exists high rates of unemployment and in the rural areas this has led to economically unstable rural households partly due to the effects of male migration. In this regard, rural women have to find alternatives on their own and head households out of meagre financial resources. Access to political power by a few with the promotion of sectional social and economic interests have also been to the disadvantage of a large proportion within society. South Africa has now one of the world's largest unequal patterns of distribution of income and wealth.

The ANC (1994:126) has noted that in South Africa, within this deep-seated crisis, a disproportionate share of the burden of poverty and inequality has always fallen on women in the rural areas who have been subjected to systematic gender oppression. Marked regional disparities existed within the economy as a result of policies previously designed to ensure a migratory labour supply to the mines. Enforced segregation and industrial decentralization located communities in areas where their economic viability was threatened.

With regard to land, ownership by a few has been overwhelming. The agricultural sector and rural economy has also been in crisis with many rural households crammed into tiny plots of land unable to produce or buy affordable food. Past efforts of government decentralization policies have failed to channel resources to the rural areas which remained the most deprived parts of the country. The consequences of these have all led to the failure of development efforts in the rural areas. The ANC (1994:147) states that this has specifically hit hard at rural women who make up the bulk of small-scale farm producers and have borne the brunt of poverty overcrowding as well as hunger in these areas.

In Africa the increasing imbalances between rural women's needs and limited resources have been identified as some of the factors inhibiting women's development progress. Apart from the imbalances the U.N. (1989:102) notes that women have additional responsibilities in that, in the absence of men, women take care of all aspects of their families' lives.

The I.L.O. (1983 :16) argues that by and large men have moved to city centres for economic reasons with hopes of finding employment - the urban drift. Other reasons for the move to cities include poverty situations within the rural areas and landlessness.

Also there have been difficulties for rural women to gain access to job opportunities in the formal sector partly due to factors such as low levels of literacy. The alternatives are discussed by the U.N. (1989:214) as having had to resort to agriculture and other income generating activities such as candle making, basket making and dress- making.

The I.L.O. (1983:16) argues that women in the absence of men tend to become seasonal labourers in agriculture receiving low wages. Their priorities including identifying markets for their own agricultural produce, household food security, generating revenue, obtaining land for production and residence and general family welfare, all become hard to bear due to their poverty situation. The U.N. (1989:214), points out that this further contributes to the non-fulfilment of household needs.

Cultural factors have also been playing a dominant role in inhibiting the women's efforts as evidenced in land ownership from which they have been excluded and the difficulty of obtaining credit without male consent.

It is against this background that the efforts of rural women in sustaining their households as well as problems encountered in this process are analysed in this section.

## 4.2 PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURE AND OTHER INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES.

At present the fundamental principles of South African development policy as laid out in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) are democracy, participation and development. This will be achieved through the leading and enabling role of the state, a thriving private sector and active involvement by all sectors of society in which combined efforts will lead to sustainable growth. O'Regan (1992:119) states that over the past decade economic growth stagnated and this has had a negative impact on almost half of the population compelled to live in the then homelands. In these areas incomes in the rural areas became low with the situation compounded by a shift to urban centres by males in search of employment opportunities.

It is also important to note that social factors tended to propel women into certain sectors of the economy, for example into service rather than production. Another important feature of women's economic and social reality in South Africa is the substantial number of women working in the informal and subsistence sectors, particularly the rural poor. In addition they are more likely than men to be employed on a part time or seasonal casual basis and a large percentage are domestic workers. Poverty, illiteracy and economic deprivation have impacted disproportionately on women.

In discussing the RDP further the S.A. Communication Services (1996:8) notes that although the RDP focuses primarily on the development of the previously disadvantaged sectors of communities, women are further supported by the constitution and will have the same opportunities as men. This means their full participation in social, economic and political spheres of life. Added to this, exclusion in political terms, oppression in terms of gender as well as culturally, have been inextricably interwoven. This web of subordination in which rural women have been trapped has had spiralling implications to a degree in which they have been unable to enjoy basic human rights (Timberlake 1985:176).

Timberlake (1985:176) attributes much of the poverty situation and many problems of the rural women in South Africa to the institutionalisation of rural poverty and environmental collapse in these areas. Timberlake (1985:177) also argues that much of the thinking behind agricultural development and alleviation of poverty in these areas goes back to the report of the Commission for the Socio-Economic Development of the Bantu Areas within the Union of South Africa under the chairmanship of the Professor F.R. Tomlinson.

In an effort to hold back agricultural development and any further development efforts to life sustaining activities, the then government rejected investment expenditure in the homelands as recommended by Tomlinson. Therefore agriculture did not get the investment needed, especially cash crops and irrigation which Tomlinson had envisaged, thus the rural areas lacked the capital to improve their agricultural production.

The other reasons that the government had focused on were more political in nature. To this regard, development at large in rural areas was to be the responsibility of the respective homelands. A report by the Surplus People Project (1983:1) reflects that discriminatory and oppressive laws and institutions created underdevelopment of the rural areas thus the rich areas became richer and the poor became poorer. Confined as they were on the limited land areas of the then reserves, the people who have been

pastoral people for whom cattle constituted a resource to be accumulated rather than consumed, greatly overstretched the available pastures thus exposing the soil to further natural forces of erosion. Timberlake (1985:179) notes that in 1980 population density of the homelands was 66 people per square kilometre higher than any other continental African country except Rwanda.

The odd combination of over-population, scarce employment opportunities and droughts, hit hard at the homelands in the 1980s. According to Baldwin (1975:11) there has always in the rural areas existed problems of uneconomically small size of farm holdings, extremely poor soils and overpopulation. This has, for the rural women, meant to remain behind to make a living, the ruling out of any significant degree of acquiring essential farm inputs including soil conservation. Added to this problem, the building up of a system of intensive agribusinesses based on chemical fertilizers, pesticide and irrigation have always been remote thus leading to an increasingly fragile, barren environment which could only be maintained by greater levels of state input.

In South Africa, despite the environmental problems that have inhibited rural women's progress in the agricultural sector, Currie (1994:147) discusses the disadvantaged position of rural women from the customary law perspective. The general conclusion drawn also by Prekel (1986:42) from customary law is that it has been systematically discriminatory, indicating a pervasive legal disability inflicted on women. For example, women have been incapable of acquiring or disposing of rights on property.

This situation is described by O'Sullivan (1994:187) as "putting women in their place" and the use of classification further maintains the justification for preventing women from assuming positions of authority. Agricultural production, sale of cash crops or food surpluses if any, may be the other chief source of cash income for the majority of households.

According to Engberg (1990:134) three categories of income-generating activities can be identified:

- activities which require the use of skills and little extra capital investment, for example the marketing of poultry, eggs, livestock and agricultural surpluses;

- activities that require higher amounts of capital investment for example, basket making, food making and the sale of products, weaving, pottery, quilt making and other crafts;
- service activities which require some level of training for example, day-care, attendants for children, village mid-wife, adult educators, village level workers.

A major constraint faced by the self-employed and home based micro-enterprises in the rural communities is the lack of a market that can readily purchase their goods and most local rural communities are poor and have no stable source of income.

A case in point is the problem to sell goods to far away places meaning additional transportation costs and entering a market that is already filled with similar products. This faces local women of Orange Farm at present who find it extremely difficult to sell their locally manufactured garments, as the area is far away from central business districts where prospective buyers could be found, thus compounding the problem. The alternative therefore is to resort to other sources of income generation. Rowbothan and Mitter (1994:4) argued that some of the constraints have deep historical roots while others are defined by existing social relations all creating complex circumstances in which women find themselves.

To this regard, in home-based production problems are also experienced. Women and children tend to be invisible workers, gathering materials or doing the processing for the males or for some outside employer to market. Given the fact that large markets have the ability to attract large sections of consumers, the micro-level income generators without any financial support stand to be losers in a highly competitive environment.

Throughout the Third World, Weekes - Vagliani (1990:11) notes that policy makers need to know which support measures will reach the intended target groups. If this does not occur, development efforts may have unintended results. A support structure therefore which encourages entrepreneurship on the part of rural women, training, affordable or reasonable credit and loan systems, infrastructural support are all issues that call for policy making bodies within any country to ensure effective implementation of rural development strategies at large.

## 4.3 CHILD WELFARE AND FAMILY HEALTH

The inability of rural women to engage in life-sustaining activities as noted in the previous section has negative effects on the household at large. This is more pronounced in those households where income means that the individual needs of each child cannot be met. Within a society in which men have had control over the economy and have been the dominant forces in political organizations, the social burden now faces the women. Nomvete (1984:97) points out that legally, African women have not been able to act as guardians of their children but have been assigned the role of maintaining the home as wives.

As regards health issues, Khan (1991:89) describes health as being determined not by the physical make-up only but also by socio-economical status. Patriarchal societies limit women in many ways including their diet, the way they relate to their families and division of labour. Basing observation in Bangladesh, Khan (1991:89) further notes that poor women suffer from diseases caused by poverty for example, malnourishment which may lead to chronic diseases such as anaemia, as well as diseases caused by the lack of knowledge of basic hygiene.

Mfono (1990:16) observes that as the dual role of the rural women increases within the household, the contemporary society also regards the care of children under the age of six as a subject of concern. This means mounting pressure on the women in ensuring a better quality of life for the young. When she seeks extra income for the household the woman is accused by society of abandoning the important task of looking after the young in favour of labour markets. The message that comes across - as contradictory as the society's expectations are - is that the woman's place is in the home. Dankelman and Davidson (1988:132) state that women realise better than anyone else what the consequences are for very large families but that they are victims of a harsh reality which militates against their viewpoints.

This specifically refers to the increasing view of the heavy toll that continued child-birth and child-rearing exacts on the women and the children's health. Pregnancy-related, maternal and infant deaths are still unacceptably high in developing countries and could be reduced by family planning well communicated in the most remote areas.

Cultural and social values encourage large families a view discussed by (Dankelman and Davidson 1988:132). This means though women are acknowledging the heavy burden accompanying caring for the family, this does not change the attitudes of society.



Those who have the courage against all odds to make ends meet through self-employment are according to Jhabvala (1994:116) extremely vulnerable. They have very limited or no resources to fall back on, no support structure, but are crushed under numerous burdens. Their economic existence is procured as they earn a living from day-to-day. If cultural and social values were not as harsh as they are now, even for the working husbands, the additional income from the wife's job would make a substantial difference to their families' welfare at large. The shift from the home, the water fountain, the fields in order to bring home some income would certainly have positive implications for the children's welfare or children's care.

Vickers (1991:27) reflects the double disadvantage of being poor and female by stating that because in some Third World societies female children have a lower nutritional status and higher mortality rates, they are likely to be more affected by general worsening of health conditions. This fact according to Vickers (1991:27) is further supported by Unicef's State of the World's Children report of 1989. Furthermore, half a million women die of maternal causes worldwide every year (Vickers 1991:27).

Cleves-Mosse (1991:83) supports Vickers by arguing that in personal physical terms rapid child-bearing, especially if it begins around the age of 15, brings with it considerable risks both to the mother and the child. Early child-bearing results in high maternal mortality. While statistics from developed countries show maternal mortality rates of around 10-20 per 100 000 live births, in India rates many from 418-592 (Cleves-Mosse 1991:86).

With regards to the situation on women in Nigeria, Iyun (1995:31) notes that more often than not governments of the Third World have budgeting allocations serving merely as political pronouncements, and only a small percentage of the sum allocated is actually spent on health. Women tend to pay the price as they are the most affected considering the responsibility of caring for the family.

In Nigeria specifically, Iyun (1995:31) notes that despite the government's commitment to implement Primary Health Care at the Federal level, available programmes point to the downward trend in government expenditure on health from 5.4% of capital expenditure in 1981 to 1.5% in 1989. Recently, as Iyun (1995:33) discovers, the prices of basic items such as drugs, dressings and medical supplies have increased tremendously because of the heavy import component, in a situation in which the local currency (the naira) had depreciated almost daily. The problem seems to be that personal endowments of authorities take the lion's share of capital expenditure (Iyun 1995:33).

The most crucial issue in women's health according to Ofosu (1994:173) is the education of women and men alike on the implications of proper maternal and child health. Shorter birth intervals and the state of maternal and child health are directly related. In many instances Ofosu (1994:73) argues, it is the occurrence of an earlier than desired pregnancy which leads to the shortening of the mother's recovery time.

Shorter birth intervals will also increase the pressure on the household's often inadequate resources. At a time when, in addition to falling real incomes, households are being made to bear increasingly high proportions of health and educating children. This further leads to poorer levels of health and education. Palmer (1991:144) supports this view by stating that investing in the quality of life of children is important but will be a more direct burden on the woman if it comes at a time when real income has fallen.

The experiences of women all over Africa are duplicated in South Africa where the situation is roughly the same for the rural South African woman.

#### **4.4 WOMEN AND MANAGING THE HOUSEHOLD: INHIBITING FACTORS**

It is important to note that added to the lack of support from those in authority, the traditional African concept of the wife was based on the assumption that the wife is a useful adjunct of her husband and his family. Thus a man possessed cattle, land and a number of wives' and children as his collective "assets". The wives' role in the family was that of child-bearer and provider while the husband's role was that of protector. The wives worked on the land providing food for the husband and children.

Lele (1991:50) states that women in developing countries work longer hours than men in housekeeping, childcare fetching fuel wood and water as well as being in the fields. As a society then, becomes increasingly complex the problems of child raising grow in proportion.

#### 4.4.1 WOMEN AS EDUCATORS WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS

Cottingham (1983:143) states that as mothers, women are responsible for a range of functions including caring for the entire household, communicating with educationist and church elders to guide them in the upbringing of their children. Verghese, Chadwick and Charnes (1983:110) expose the nature and extent of the inhibition of the crucial role assumed by women in guiding and managing the entire household by referring to a world-wide phenomenon that stems from the patriarchal nature of world culture.

In the developing world, they have not had the opportunity to be as educated as their male counterparts partly due to the unequal access to a range of resources that include education. This has made it even more difficult to improve the quality of life of their own children while being expected by society at large to fully provide support for the entire household, be it food security, health education and home.

#### 4.4.2 FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

Sources of livelihood for the rural woman are scarce, with many depending on assistance from husbands or those children who happen to be employed in one way or the other. Liebenberg (1995:23) argues that it is not merely the lack of income which compounds the rural woman's problems, an enormous proportion of very basic needs are presently unmet. These one would argue, do require money in order to be satisfied.

In general, social welfare includes the right to basic needs such as shelter, food, health care and all those aspects that promote the physical, social and emotional well-being of all people in a society. With the absence of men partly due to what could be considered a rural drain of capable individuals, women continue to struggle in finding survival strategies.

According to Lipman (1984:158) those women who are more fortunate will have husbands sending back home what they can in terms of cash. Others have elderly relatives whose meagre monthly pension, when it is paid brings some food for the household, mainly for the children. Many however, are left to care entirely on their own when a migrant family member - a husband, son or daughter stops sending the rural remittance.

### 4.4.3 SINGLE PARENTHOOD

Women who are single parents often encounter other problems which are peculiar to their situation. In addition to their frequently precarious financial circumstances they have to deal with issues such as determining how to manage relations in their own personal lives. This is so as the woman is frequently the major link between the family and the large community. She is in essence the family's anchor into the larger community.

Nattrass (1980:10) states that in South Africa, on average in 1970 more than 60% of the men aged between 20 and 45 years of age were absent from their rural homes. This means that their wives are heading the households on their own. Added to this it means that women in these age groups not only bear the brunt of child-raising, but also make up for the short-fall in the rural labour supply generated by the absence of men.

This further requires girls to drop out from school so as to assist in the household's daily chores. According to Karl (1983:74) girls throughout the developing countries tend to be school drop-outs at a rate higher than boys. This confirms the pressure on the mother who cannot cope on her own and is forced to have daughters of school going age gathering wood, fetching water and carrying out many more household duties.

Added to this pressure problems of single motherhood are according to Nattrass (1980:10) reflected by a completely different set-up as far as the male head of the household's income expenditure is concerned. While the migrant worker tends to consume between 60 and 70% of his wage earnings, the rest of his family back home is in most cases forced to exist on what they can grow. Typical cash remittances rates tend to range from 16 to 28% of the migrant worker's total income (Nattrass 1980:11). As a result it usually affects children's welfare considering the fact that they soon reach the school-going age and the amount of cash needed to fund educational necessities and transportation costs to far away institutions of learning becomes too much to bear on the part of the single mother.

### 4.4.4 CHILD CARE FOR THE WORKING WOMAN

Agbonifo (1983:2005) notes that in the rural areas, population growth had tended to reach alarming rates and health care centres and day care centres available to the working mother are scarce. Child spacing is a family resource management decision.

In the past especially in more culturally bound communities within the rural set-up, survival strategies of poor families could be to have more children with the assumption that some will die and others are needed for household labour.

Circumstances have now changed hence Cottingham (1983:149) argues that the issue now from women themselves is contraception, as continuous pregnancy and childbirth are tiring and ultimately debilitating and dangerous. The fight now for good, safe, cheap and available methods of contraception is clearly a major priority for women, their family's health and well-being (Cottingham 1983:49). Women cannot cope with large families.

The World Bank (1989:X11) observes that in rural Kenya for example attitudes shifted among women willing to have large families in 1989 with 17% of couples of child-bearing age practising contraception compared to 7% in 1997.

This has according to the World Bank (1989:X11) been attributed to Kenya's massive investment in educating women about Primary Health Care. An educative process therefore is necessary to instill the importance of the management of a small family which in turn has benefits to the health of the woman. This should apply both to men and women.

In instances where the mother is working, it has been common practice recently to set up day-care centres by the communities in an endeavour to alleviate the heavy work load on the part of the working woman in the rural areas. Cobbe (1982:838) cites Lesotho as an extreme example of a "sending" country - with male migration to the cities - where women are left with no option but to try and make ends meet. The woman wage earner therefore has to be away from home during the day leaving the young to the care of some form of a responsible home.

There has however been controversy and problems relating to the currently emerging day care institutions, with overcrowding being one of the most disturbing situations. Facilities are needed for both the physical care and the safety of the young child as well as for a range of emotional, psychological and social experiences. This refers specifically to the promotion of a sense of well-being, the provision of a sense of belonging, provision of an educative environment similar to that of an ordinary

home. Above all the children need to be acknowledged of the fact that they are safe and secure in the absence of the mother. Thus for the woman this means also that the child's well-being is taken care of while she is away.

It must also be noted that quality child care does not necessarily mean expensive child care. Good interpersonal relations, clean surroundings, requirements to meet the basic nutritional needs of the children and an extensive range of child activities are as important as a properly erected building (Shenk 1991:351).

Mfono (1990:17) states that at present only a very small percentage of the children of pre-school going age have access to educare. Mfono (1990:17) attributes this to both the cost involved and availability of funds within the community in organizing the provision of facilities. It could therefore be argued that governments have an important role to play in funding these institutions so as to afford women access for the benefit of their children. In South Africa educare is the name commonly used to the compound of experiences in child care (Mfono 1990:17).

In addition to the inadequacy of social services, the health care system that has been available has been grossly inadequate in the rural areas. The ANC (1994:42) states that there are by international standards probably the worst scenarios in the past in the health care system within the country. Health services have according to the ANC (1994:42) been fragmented, inefficient and ineffective, with resources grossly mismanaged and poorly distributed.

Furthermore the ANC (1994:42) notes that there are probably enough resources, with this country spending R550 per capita per annum on health care. This is nearly ten times what the World Bank estimates it should cost to provide basic public health services and essential clinical care for all, yet millions of rural people are still without such services or such care. Although there is now an effort by the country's Ministry of Health to provide services especially for the elderly, women and children, the situation as it is now will take long to reach well-balanced proportions of service delivery in health terms. The negative effects of non-delivery of services will be borne by women who are at a more disadvantaged position economically and socially than their male counterparts.

The World Bank (1989:Xii) notes that in Kenya, in the aggregate about half of Kenya's 20,2 million total population is female. In the rural areas about 60% of the population is below the age of 20. With improved health care and broader development, women in Kenya live to an average of 56 years and up, compared to 46 years in 1965.

## 4.5 CONTROL AND DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In general access and control of resources have always been a matter of concern in the rural areas, where women have been subjected to a range of inhibiting factors. Access to and control over the benefits of their labour has also been a separate concern.

Presumably the benefits of agricultural production increases income but cash earned by men has not necessarily meant the availability of such cash to women or the household. Hence Burman (1991:103) states that women have tended to resort to seeking jobs through desperation. Furthermore, this relates to a woman's arranging for child care - for which she may have to pay substantially - or leave her children unsupervised, with all the attendant dangers.

The inertia of custom, tradition and sheer prejudice have all according to Van der Horst (1977:46) strengthened their disadvantaged position. According to Van der Vyver (1992:98) about 46% of South Africa's population is considered to be non-urban and must make a living from primary agriculture. An estimated 90% of women in the rural area are employed in the agricultural sector and like elsewhere in Africa, agriculture is regarded as the work of women in the tribal areas (Van der Vyver 1992:98).

Women rely on this sector for cash income as this has become crucial for individual and family survival. As a result, already overburdened women still put more effort into obtaining cash income, despite the worsening labour conditions and falling rates of remuneration for that labour. Women in these areas also engage in unpaid family labour. These are noted by Rowbothan and Mitter (1994:4) in the previous section as constraints created by social relations that favour men. Many women are on the family farm or business, yet have had no control over the fruits of their labour. This has been further re-inforced by their lack of control over land, labour and technological advancements.

Once again, as Van Vuuren (1979:5) notes, in the rural set-up tribal leaders expected women to be subordinate to men to have children and to be responsible for raising them as well as to earn less pay than men. In the past, it has been through these expectations that men separated women from the broader economic, political, legal, decision making and educational structures. Control over the woman's labour in all aspects as well as distribution of income has always been in the hands of men (Mabandla 1991:75).

According to Mabandla (1991:75) in order to address these imbalances, the introduction of gender equality as a human rights principle is the way to go. This in South Africa has been recently regarded as a constitutional matter and is part of the bill of rights.

A study conducted by Bembridge (1988:151) before the new political dispensation in Tanskei reflects the imbalances as regards the division of labour within households and the distribution thereof. In traditional Xhosa society, Bembridge (1988:151) notes at the age of five or six girls began to nurse their younger brothers and sisters or help their mothers draw water, fetch firewood and gather food. Later the girl would begin to grind cereals, cook and hoe the lands; by the time she was twelve, she was doing all the house work expected of a fully grown woman. It was also at the same time incumbent upon a woman to be subservient hence the lack of control over any resource in general.

However, Warby (1996:18) argues that positive changes have been marked as women are in general joining the workforce in their households with the percentage of economically active women increasing dramatically. Laws have also changed, giving way to gender equality with women having choices which their grandparents-mothers-never had (Warby 1996:18).

## 4.6 PROBLEMS OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND AVAILABILITY OF CREDIT

Rural development is according to Reynolds (1981:167) reflected in terms of physical and capital resources. Even where these are relatively abundant, the way that capital is deployed to enlarge the productivity of natural resources is a question of human and institutional efficiency. When physical resources and capital are scarce, the qualitative aspects of human and institutional functions become even more crucial if a cumulative development process is to arise. This in broader terms means that the design of rural development, community based and controlled institutions are the key to rural renewal and should include women.

Trollip (1981:14) explains this issue by differentiating between tangible resources which are visible for example, land whereas an intangible resource is not visible as in the interests of an individual or motivation. Some resources are according to Trollip



(1981:14) placed in between as in time, energy and money. All are essential and are used in combination to increase human productivity.

The human element is another important factor for the provision of productive labour and rural women have acted as an important element in this regard. Brain (1976:267) however, maintains that the women have been less than second class role players in terms of controlling resources needed and the benefits thereof. Palmer (1985:6) discusses the issue of efficiency of resource allocation by attaching relevance to rights of appropriating returns of labour. To the individual, one allocation of labour is more efficient than another if it leads to a greater personal return from which to meet expected obligations. How much women gain from this depends on their powers of decision making and appropriation of produce as well as cash income. Hence Boserup (1970:62) states that in traditional rural environments this decision making power has been non-existent.

As already noted in the previous section, women have not usually been involved in the category of formal ownership of crucial resources. Mullings (1976:248) further notes that in general, men have been able to enter the money economy or sector more easily than women. Men predominated in cash-cropping recruitment of labour to the plantations was often restricted to men. Thus women, in addition to having to support themselves and their children when labour took men away from home, found themselves in a money economy where the products of their labour were inferior and found that they no longer were part of a societies' resource distribution process (Mullings 1976:248).

In discussing the issue of ownership the I.L.O. (1980 a:30) takes the issue a step further, by referring to Africa at large. The I.L.O. notes that land that used to be held by communities became the object of property rights and these property rights went to men. In this regard, simple use rights were gradually replaced by property rights. In addition to this, associated with the lack of land, this has been accompanied by limited and decreasing access to such resources as fuel, wood and other goods that had been freely available. As a result women either bought goods or had to travel greater distances in order to find them and in many cases they must simply do without.

The I.L.O. (1980 a:31) states that to compound the problem even more the structure of agriculture which acts as a major means of survival as well as the markets are all organized for the benefit of export production. This is also the situation in South Africa.

Schultz (1989:88) refers to another crucial issue, and that is credit systems. He points out that land ownership has acted as a collateral for credit but women have not owned land. Even where in theory laws referred to the equality of men and women, actual practices of the control of property especially in marriage, strongly suggest that women have not had equal access to loan collateral and thus were denied credit.

Another report by the I.L.O. (1980 b:56) confirms this view by stating that where improved technologies exist and the fortunate women have access to them, they cannot afford to take part or utilise the inputs they require due to their inability to obtain credit.

The fact that bias has existed is undisputed. The delivery mechanisms via farmer's co-operatives or parastatals have always been directed to male clientele (Palmer 1991:33). Although in some instances credit is given to women in principle - without distinction based on gender - it is granted through the intermediary of co-operatives. If a woman with two or three dependants can assure the co-operative of her ability to meet a repayment schedule, ordinarily there is no difficulty admitting her to a co-operative in order that she can obtain a loan. But this is the case of a woman head of a household (Palmer 1991:33).

Co-operatives, of course offer services but this does not overcome a bias against women and the disparities especially between male and female-managed farms. Due (1982:161) notes that capital for equipment and operating costs is a problem.

In Sudan no loans are extended to women, in Kenya, the agricultural Finance Company requires a regular salary or a deed to land (Due 1982:162). Both types of collateral are more widely available to men.

Delancey (1987:12) found problems with the co-operatives in the Cameroon. These co-operatives, one would expect that they would at least provide support and eliminate the inequalities. In the Cameroon at the group level of the co-operatives Delancey (1987:12) observed that in the original planning no provision was made for these women's groups to gain access to external sources of capital even though such sources exist in the Cameroon and are open to other types of organizations needing financial backing.

In obtaining income, although the household unit in some instances manages to become a vehicle for selling of whatever has been produced to the market, this has tended to create divisions between the head (usually the male) and its' other members, the women, children and other dependants. The former has usually been the only member who has had access to further technical information (I.L.O. 1980 b:57).

Furthermore, the men have been the spokes person in as far as household production is concerned, receiving the pay for the household's work. He had managed to acquire new administrative roles as the supervisor of the household's labour and banker of it's income (I.L.O. 1980 b:58).

In an effort to devise means of alleviating the imbalances in South Africa, the ANC (1994:110) aims at reforming the financial sector as a whole. This takes the form of development efforts addressing the special position of women, as they make up the majority of small-scale farmers and bear the brunt of poverty, overcrowding and hunger in rural areas. To correct underfunding, the misuse of resources, the availing of funds by central government is being targeted at.

Added to this the ANC (1994:111) points out that a process of instituting land reform that allows people in the rural areas access to land for production, is a requirement. The government further aims at supporting activities such as small-scale farming which can increase productivity, incomes and household food security.

To prevent the marginalisation of women in small-scale farming it is necessary to educate, train and allow women to participate fully in planning and implementation of programs through properly constituted community structures. In a bid to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, location and other non-economic factors, the government aims at instituting measures that are stringent especially in financial support mechanisms (ANC 1994:111).

Furthermore together with financial institutions the government aims at a non-discriminatory lending criteria geared at easing strict credit worthiness and collateral matters. Support services provided by the government including marketing, finance access to co-operatives now focuses on small and resource poor farmers and households especially women. This is now where the role of community banks to finance informal entrepreneurs especially women is presently emphasized.

## **4.7 INTERDEPENDENCE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIES**

It is not usual for economists or agricultural analysts to include households in their analysis. The focus of the discipline of economics is usually monetized sectors of production, capital formation, commodities, markets, industrial firms, international trade and large financial institutions. In the study of economics, households are usually considered consumers not producers.

The informal unpaid labour of the household or the output of goods and services used by households are not even taken into account when a nation's gross domestic product is calculated. But in the Third World and in South Africa the rural household can play a major role especially but not exclusively in the informal sector.

#### 4.7.1 THE INFORMAL SECTOR

The actions of producing, distributing, consuming and investing carried out by household members to meet the needs and wants of the household system apply to household economy. In discussing the formal economy Engberg (1990:54) describes this sector as an exchange economy. This means that money or goods and services of equal monetary value are exchanged; economic values or prices and the procedures for making the exchange are known. The exchange is regulated by market forces, government or a combination of the two. The informal economy although now clearly visible in South Africa has not been clearly documented. Many women and children work in this sector.

Engberg (1990:55) suggests that the informal sector includes three types of enterprises:

- i. Small-scale subcontracting producing intermediate goods for the formal sector for example machine parts;
- ii. small-scale manufacturing producing consumer goods for the domestic market usually in competition with formal sector goods for example handicrafts;
- iii. small-scale personal services such as petty-trading, dressmaking, hair-dressing, transport and so on.

This is mostly the informal sector producers in the local community.

Experience within the South African context indicates that women workers in these sectors have been and continue to be disadvantaged in various ways. Some are over-employed small-scale manufacturing but for low returns, some are under-employed at discriminating wages.

The economic role of rural women goes beyond simply cultivating the fields and picking the fruit and vegetables. After harvest, women process the raw produce. Another activity is handicrafts with this varying from one region to another and includes pottery, weaving and basketry. This activity is, however, not as remunerative as it used to be, because of heavy competition. The scale of the goods involves women having to travel long distances defeating the advantage of having the material primarily at no cost as it is mostly gathered, income is mostly generated through selling to tourists. Also there seems to be a tendency of producing more and more of the same goods without careful and innovative exploration of the markets.

The outcome is the entering of a market already having such goods and the profits become minimal or non-existent. Most women's projects in general neglect the crucial element of marketing and financial management. According to the I.L.O. (1980 b:49) some of the areas that have contributed to low rates of turnover are:

- \*lack of skills in analysing consumer behaviour and tastes;
- \*whether a product is a necessity or a luxury item to determine its turnover;
- \*whether it is an item in short supply as against demand and is based on the availability and continuous flow of raw materials;
- \*the marketing channels and accessibility to them;
- \*the capacity to hold on to production when markets are seasonal; and
- \*the flexibility in operations according to changing conditions.

The commercial system as a whole has tended not to protect the small producers. It has been a great challenge for rural women to produce and enter into a variety of markets including poultry, vegetable growing and so on, yet they have had to do this as a means of survival. As pointed out earlier, the practical problems such as credit systems and the issue of obtaining a collateral, including the marketing part all make it difficult for rural women to enter and succeed in this challenging and demanding environment.

## 4.7.2 THE FORMAL SECTOR

A particular weakness in the part of the economy as a whole has been to neglect the importance of the interdependence of both formal and informal activities. According to the ANC (1994:76) this has also been aggravated by discriminatory policies in terms of gender as well as the inability to maintain a dynamic small-scale and micro-enterprise sector.

The failure to channel resources says the ANC (1994:77) to the rural areas at large, which remains the most deprived parts of the country has led to the neglect of these areas as vital sources for the fostering of growth of the nation's economy and not only household economies.

Engberg (1990:54) states that the major goals of the formal economy are growth and maximizing profits. Wages of paid employees may be kept low in order to make higher profits. This Engberg (1990:54) argues, is a sector usually made of primary (farming, mining, forestry, fisheries and other natural resource industries) secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (service) sectors.

Engberg (1990:55) also refers to the public sector as the government sector at all levels - national, provincial and local. Employees are paid a salary; decision making and control is often centralized or carried out by senior members of administrators or boards. On the other hand the work of the private sector is always considered as productive as it can be given a monetary value, measured and taken into account when calculating a country's gross domestic product.

According to Rissik (1993:52) attitudes towards women in the formal sector are slowly changing but many Third World countries still lag behind the rest of the developed world in realizing women as an essential part of the workforce. Even though sexual discrimination in South Africa was outlawed in 1988, sexist job reservation is still very much in practice (Rissik 1993:52).

Even now, although some companies may outwardly agree to equal opportunities and even affirmative action plans, most have very few if any women at board level. It still holds true that a woman has to be "better" academically, with experience to compete with her male counterpart. Those who are "academically" suitable, if they succeed to occupy the senior positions they have to prove that they can do the job, in fact working twice as hard compared to their male colleagues.

Women's economic contribution at large is essential. Rissik (1993:74) notes that it is now recognized that the South African economy as a whole could not operate without the contribution of women. But there are still inequalities. The sheer numbers, 40% of women in the workforce have forced at least some changes in conditions in the workplace (Rissik 1993:74).

Although a large part of women's problems can be attributed to their subordination to men, Kimane (1985:183) says that women have the potential to contribute to development. However, one of the constraints is that of low self esteem, that is, most women do not recognise their capabilities and potentials. Instead they are filled with "self-pity" thus delaying the process of making a positive effort to improve their lot.

As Rissik (1993:74) notes that in South Africa it is therefore not surprising that the first black women to found a Union, Lucy Mvubelo, came from the clothing industry. This was partly due to the disillusionment with inequalities within the workplace.

One could conclude at this stage that the formal sector still has a long way to go before the practical - and - not - theoretical - implementation of gender equality is in place. With the new constitution in South Africa and gender equality receiving importance, it is now a matter of all those concerned with women issues to practise what they preach. Finally the problem is that both the informal and formal sectors have a contribution to make to a country's economy. However, the former's activities are not as widely documented and recognized as the latter.

## 4.8 CONCLUSION

For the most part of this chapter, various forms of rural women's subordination have been analyzed with traditional practices assuming a dominant role in subjecting women to their low social, economic and political spheres of life. Over and above, the history of South Africa's society has partly contributed to the marginal position of women in rural areas.

In development literature, the household tends to be assumed to be a static unit of production and consumption. In addressing rural household dynamics, it is essential even at present to deal further with the question of whether rural women are still marginalized and if so, why? Of crucial importance also is the question of what kind of development for rural women is necessary and this ought to be parallel to the wider question of what kind of development for rural people is necessary. Very often the questions are viewed as incompatible, with the former being viewed as subordinate to the latter. It is at this stage that gender inequalities and women's contribution to the household as well as the community at large, are introduced and must be prevented.

This further means that in matters concerning rural policy, development programmes for women should be addressed to the problems that concern rural women. This will further ensure a sense of independence as well as reducing the past controls - which in some instance still prevail - by men over rural women's labour processes and its outcomes, that is control over output.

As noted in the discussion, previously men often had greater access to labour inputs than women and greater control over the proceeds obtained. It is therefore insufficient to look into the question of equality of access to land, access to labour and its control also need to be taken into account. This further calls for in-depth studies to understand these processes and the dynamics of change that lead to them. In a broader context, rural communities require practical access to financial services and a wide range of support mechanisms to improve their quality of life.

To correct the history of misallocation or misdirection of resources the objective of rural development should also be to focus on the co-ordination of activities of the relevant government agents, and to pass much of the control of government - funded services to rural people for whom they are intended. The government has a central role to play in consultation with these rural communities involved in their own development.

This includes dealing with major constraints such as availability of credit, markets, skills and the establishment of supportive institutional arrangements to be of assistance in practical rather than theoretical terms. Practical recommendations would along these lines have to include:

- \* an emphasis on achieving equal access to all types of skills in order to eliminate gender inequalities;
- \* the need for projects of employment creation where women have equal access;
- \* social security measures and social services for rural women must be studied, recommended and implemented in more meaningful ways;
- \* ensuring a continuous process of education and training of rural women.

Finally, appropriate attention should be given to the human dimension, taking into account women's contribution within their households and their communities.



# CHAPTER 5

## WOMEN'S NEEDS FOR GRASSROOT DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The most crucial aspects which are identified in this section are the issues relating to means appropriated to meeting the needs of rural women in a development context. The crucial step in this regard is to better understand and assess the current contributions and constraints of women in order to promote their roles and participation locally. The rationale for such attention is that women have been largely ignored both as subjects and objects of most development efforts worldwide.

This by-passing of an important and essential resource has done so much to limit the opportunities for women to engage in fruitful or productive activities and tends to limit the scope of development for any country. Women's needs and household needs are directly related in that women especially in those households headed by women are key actors in the household. Their role is to oversee and supervise the household's well-being. However, Allison (1985:24) says that there is still a tendency by researchers, government officials, policy makers and international donors to adopt a static and undifferentiated approach both to women's and household's needs at large.

Where women are involved in agricultural activities, problems have persisted as the use of new tools and techniques have always been to their disadvantage. This phenomenon, around the world reveals itself through literature, that inputs such as machinery in farming and irrigation, new seed varieties have had benefits going to large scale farm operators and to men. Muchena (1983:4) on discussing gender based development, states that although women have always been involved in agricultural production, their inputs are not well recognized.

Added to this, the infrastructural component in supporting their activities including daily household tasks plays a major role as it partly determine the making or breaking of any livelihood efforts. The optimism of the early 70s about Third World Development at large has according to Adamson (1980:7) given way to widespread gloom rather than improving women's quality of life. Instead women's poverty conditions, ill-health, hunger accelerated.

It is therefore in this regard that women's organizations and their needs analysis will be looked into. In a nutshell do the above mentioned processes of women's contribution to development enhance the meeting of rural women's needs or not.

## 5.2 TECHNOLOGY

In addition to women in rural area being subjected to a vast superstructure of customs and traditional practices, their problems are also related to problems of underdevelopment and dependency. Dependency is mainly based on their reliance on men for making ends meet. The men have always had the privilege of being exposed to a number of technological advances especially in agriculture. According to Mbilinyi (1984:16) women's projects throughout the Third World have failed partly because of the limitations placed on them. Rahama (1988:71) is of the view that within rural development programmes, extra efforts are necessary to enable women to have access to resources and benefits from project facilities including technological innovations.

Technology and its development is a social process whereby its application calls for suitable adaptation to conditions of a given situation. Furthermore it must be compatible with the human, financial and material resources which surround its application for it to be termed appropriate. As long as technology and information remain a distant dream for women, then development programmes will not yield desired results (Bharathi, Dhadave and Chandram 1992:678).

As men are usually the decision makers and their activities clearly visible in rural societies, there has been a tendency for activities performed by them to be modernized in preference to women's. In most agriculture policies attention tends to be focused on modernization and improved technologies for crop production done by men in the field rather than on post harvest activities, which is women's work. Moreover, development efforts to modernize or bring into the cash economy in those subsistence level activities traditionally done by women, like grain storage or poultry, now tend to go to men and machines. As a result the expert knowledge of women in these areas is lost, and women are being more and more isolated from technological developments or progress and confined to a marginal role of unskilled labourers (Peters 1983:117). Women in turn lose work which means a loss of status and the knowledge gap between men and women widens, bringing a social imbalance in the family.

The marginal role assumed by women is evident in development projects where agricultural assistance schemes, training in modern farming techniques and the acquisition of machinery as well as land generally have been conceived with men in mind. Hence Carr (1991:206) points out that technology which women could use is almost non-existent because their contribution is said to be marginal and only for family use, if it does exist.

It has also become apparent in some Third World countries that the introduction of new crops, while increasing the participation of women in the labour force often fails to improve their income. Makinda (1991:17) recommends that more baseline information to monitor the efficiency of technology once introduced should consistently be gathered. This type of exercise must be technologically oriented focusing on problems that women encounter with the new technology. This should be action orientated Makinda (1991:18).

When production within a household occurs, the household as a unit does in some instances become a vehicle for selling in the market economy but this creates divisions between the head of the family and its other members - women, children and other dependants. The former is the only family member in most instances who have access to credit, co-operatives and technical information.

This according to Baud (1993:14) is in contrast to the amount of work the woman does in family management. The men in the process acquire new administrative roles as the supervisor of the family's labour and income while the wife or wives take on some of the characteristics of a rural proletariat. Baud (1993:14) also notes that the recognition of women's contribution on the other hand decreases as the type of labour becomes more casual and marginal.

Therefore, the modernization of agricultural techniques increases the inequality which already existed as there are differences in levels of productivity between men and women. Women's work both in the home and on the family plot, receives no cash reward and produces low yields, since no capital and technical knowledge is invested in it.

Cain (1981:3) argues that although technology can be a powerful force in promoting social and economic development, without careful attention its positive influence can be undermined by negative externalists and unanticipated secondary effects within the context of developmental progress. The choice of technologies therefore is one of the most important collective decisions facing any developing country. It determines who works and who does not, where work is done, what is produced, the urban-rural balance and the whole pattern of income distribution.

According to Harrison (1992:247) adaptation to major changes in technology is in most cases driven by those not affected by the adaptation. At the same time those who will be forced to live or adapt to the new technology and changes it brings about are least likely to have any say in the matter. A critical issue is not to consider who makes the choices of technology as mostly those least affected by the choice are often responsible for determining that choice. Jiggins (1986:51) argues that technological choices in the development world have been influenced by irrational biases for sophisticated machinery, limited range of information about technological alternatives, lack of proper sectoral planning.

Jiggins (1986:52) notes that the lack of information or knowledge about technology by rural women compounds the problem even more as they tend to be in the dark as to what the technology can do for them. This is not only by virtue of their position outside the mainstream of such information flow but also because of the selective perception of those controlling the choices that ignore technology suitable for women.

In addressing current misconceptions about the role that technology plays in the lives of women, Cain (1981:6) discusses the myth that "technology is machinery and is fulfilling of men, not women" as untrue. This is attributed to the fact that it is true that cultural traditions in many countries prohibit women from working on or with certain machinery. However, there are instances where certain technologies can be useful in lessening the arduous tasks done by women when the technology is designed to adapt to the women's situation rather than expecting women to adapt to the technology. The arduous tasks are for example, food processing and the use of machinery in agricultural and income generating activities.

Sandhu and Sandler (1986:114) state that undeniably a major cause of the most pressing problems for Third World women has been the transfer and use of technology which is inappropriate to prevailing women's conditions.

In common with the international experience, Levin, Russon and Weiner (1994:236) note that South Africa's new developers with the active support of the World Bank and local experts are pursuing a broad programme of rural development on two fronts namely, institutional and technical. On the technical front the World Bank with the backing of some influential local development practitioners are all seeking to give a central role in allocating resources, modern agricultural inputs, extension services and irrigation facilities as well as credit (Levin, Russon and Weiner 1994:237).

Development practitioners include representatives from community based organizations, non-governmental organizations and women's organizations. The only concern although communities are involved is that while analysis and prescriptions are all coupled with and qualified by suggestions focused on "experience from elsewhere", little evidence comes forth on how these technically-based strategies from other Third World countries have benefited particularly socio-economic groups and the improved benefits of women.

Safilios - Rothschild (1994:57) argues that there tends to be a lack of sex-segregated statistics that would provide information action crucial to planners such as who the actual full-time producers are. In a similar vein Levin, Russon and Weiner (1994:237) argue that one of the key explanations for the failure of rural development programmes in general, is partly their inadequate understanding of social differentiation. The rich become richer not because they are necessarily more efficient amongst the people in the country but because of notable political influence.

It is important to note that Levin, Russon and Weiner (1994:236) argue that the position of the "progressive" African farmer, a figure idealised by colonial agricultural officers, has often been strengthened by development projects but not necessarily in ways intended by project planners. Richer peasants often get the lion share of project resources.

The instructive lesson here is that the derivation of "experience from elsewhere" - and this holds true for technological innovations - can result in little positive impact on the emerging rural development discourse in South Africa within a new dispensation. This has even more negative consequences on women's projects.

Studies conducted by Mickelwait,, Riegelman and Sweet (1976:37) reveal that throughout the Third World specifically the use of modern inputs, men are generally the ones to make decisions as to the use of modern inputs for example, new seeds, tractors, insecticide, fertilizer and so forth. It is usually so, precisely because women as a "rule" know less about such technological advances while men reap the benefits of agricultural extension training - a critical factor in imparting of skills and know-how.

The interesting thing though is that once a decision has been made to invest in any form of modern inputs women assist in the actual farm activity for example spreading fertilizer, spraying insecticide. This appears to be the pattern for most of Africa as Mickelwait, Riegelman and Sweet (1976:37) observe. In rural Nigeria, women are not involved in determinations as to the use of modern inputs. Basotho women, because of male migration, take prime responsibility for using new technology, although the husband remains the chief decision maker (Mickelwait, Riegelman and Sweet 1976:38).

Dayal (1989:25) lays emphasis on the technological crisis in agriculture in rural India. This has always been of particular concern to women as they constitute a large proportion of the workforce in agriculture and allied sectors. Dayal further states that in other sectors of the regions, economic environment, the technological crisis becomes less relevant simply because women are not active in those sectors like industry.

Technological advances have led to the strengthening of patriarchal systems of production. The introduction of mechanized processing of food, improved marketing, use of sophisticated machinery all improve the status of men (Dayal 1989:26).

The produce is handed over to large manufacturers by packaging and marketing. The most serious concern according to Dayal (1989:26) is the loosening of a grip the rural women have on cash income. Above all is the relegation of women to the primitive, non-technological, backbreaking jobs with low remuneration. The situation is worse within female headed households.

It is in this regard that Papanek (1977:20) says that the introduction of new technology may result in unexpectedly widespread displacement of women whose activities have been overlooked. This is so as far as all development programmes go as they should be examined for their impact on women, not just those thought to have a "women's angle".

The same problems were observed by Dey (1981:109) in Gambia's Rice Development projects initiated by the Taiwanese Agricultural Mission between 1966 to 1974. The involvement of Taiwanese technicians assumed that the local subsistence production system was based on a household which was a unified unit of production directed and controlled by a single male head. Failure to involve women in rice development schemes in Gambia did not only increase their dependence economically on men but Dey observed that the projects suffered huge deficiencies and low national rice production, contrary to what the planners initially had in mind. Exactly the same situation obtains in South Africa's rural development programmes. A large number of rural women are still engulfed in poverty while on the other hand, there is much widespread rhetoric on rural development projects aimed at reducing poverty in rural areas.

## 5.3 INFRASTRUCTURE

Land, water and energy constitute the most vital natural resources needed to better the lives of the rural poor in the Third World. With the emergence of a need to embark on development projects to improve the quality of life in rural areas, leaders of the developing countries ensured energy resource development initiatives. According to Galli and Funk (1995:27) recent projects with the initiative of the World Bank for example, the Social and Infrastructure Relief Projects in developing countries have made a positive impact on dealing with distress and social dislocation in rural areas. These initiatives identified women and children as the most vulnerable populations.

It has been an unfortunate situation that, prevailing economic thoughts have assumed that once capital-intensive infrastructure was built within the Third World, modern sectors would emerge which, in turn would transform the traditional sectors through the trickling down of benefits.

### 5.3.1 RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

According to Ranganathan (1992:60) since the 1950s, rural electrification has been promoted as a major driving force for the development of the rural areas of the Third World. The expectations, particularly in the 1960s and the 1970s, included rapid economic growth, increased production in agriculture, industry and commerce, modernization and other social changes. In the 1980s, however the euphoria gave way to scepticism as modernization had not lived up to the expectations as in rapid economic growth and no improvement in the rural women's way of life together with their households rural electrification had not necessarily led to development.

Rural electrification had not necessarily led to development. Conversely Ranganathan (1992:1) observes that in some cases development had occurred without electrification. The lesson from Ranganathan (1992:1) is that whatever development was intended for communities, this did not take into account priorities especially women's priorities. Although electrification is a need, there are more pressing issues that need to be addressed without electrification as a requirement.

Munasinghe (1987:xix) supports these views by arguing that time consuming activities still continue to plague the rural women. This is so inspite of the introduction of a support system such as electricity which should lead to a reduction of the amount of time and energy on production activities as well as general maintenance of the household. Rural women lack the knowledge in as far as the use of "sophisticated" electrical equipment is concerned. Furthermore they cannot afford the purchasing of such equipment.

At present fuel in the form of wood - the gathering thereof - is still a time - consuming activity for women. It includes travel time to fuel gathering areas, time spent in fuel collection, fuel preparation such as wood cutting and bundling. This is the situation in studies conducted by Engberg (1990:97) in West Java, Ghana, Mozambique, Penn, India and rural Lesotho. It is also the case in rural and even peri-urban South Africa.

Munasinghe (1987:2) emphasizes several salient points emerging through analysis of past experience. Rural electrification should be subject to the same rational analysis as other policy tools available to any government of a developing country and closely co-ordinated with them to meet broader national objectives and goals. A set of infrastructural services would be more likely to result in greater benefits to rural women by reducing their heavy burden imposed by the wide variety of household tasks they have to perform.

### 5.3.2 TRANSPORT

The costs of producing services such as transport in rural areas are quite high. This, the World Bank (1975:5) attributes to the difficulty in reaching such areas as well as that of the terrain. This impacts negatively on women's efforts to fetch water from far away places and the selling of home made goods.

The failure to restore this much needed infrastructural support is related by the World Bank (1988:2) to more often a public monopoly with too many responsibilities. The tendency, as the World Bank (1988:2) notes, is for the public sector to devote too many staff, funds and facilities for execution to the detriment of proper planning, control and evaluation. Accountability tends to lag behind and the maintenance in situations of extreme deterioration becomes another lengthy process.



If the current situation of underdevelopment prevalent in the rural areas continues, specifically the poverty conditions - experienced by rural women, the household tasks to be fulfilled by women will be difficult to accomplish. There are situations where women engage in many transport related tasks, mostly on foot carrying heavy loads on their head. According to Pankhurst (1988:13) the fortunate women who happen to work tend to incur travelling expenses of high proportions as they live far from their places of work.

Harrison (1992:175) notes that these women having to sell their own produce also experience high costs in reaching areas where buyers are readily available for example in the city centres as those buyers back home do not have sufficient income to purchase goods. Trips on the dusty and bad roads also include going to the fields for cultivation, weeding and harvesting (Harrison 1992:176). Where a grinding mill is not located within the area, women spend long hours walking to the mill, waiting in a queue for service at a cost.

Institutional considerations in rural needs projects by the World Bank (1985:6) suggest that planners must look beyond the technical perspective of the public works ministry and consider rural people's priorities and above all constraints in road improvements. Local participation in project activities increases the probability that local resources will be mobilized for subsequent maintenance at very cost effective levels. This includes participation by women.

The World Bank (1996:1) which focuses on infrastructure, stresses the importance of expanding transport as central to development. The World Bank (1996:1) takes the issue further by stating that without physical access to jobs, health education centres and other amenities without physical access to resources and markets in general, growth stagnates and poverty reduction cannot be sustained. Inappropriately designed transport strategies for example poor road conditions can result in networks and services that aggravate the condition of the poor, harm the environment, ignore the needs of users and exceed the capacity of public finances.

Young (1993:11) argues that while land remains a primary concern for rural women the world over, women are speaking more and more about the conditions of their daily lives - issues of water, income, social services that are making their lives too hard to bear. The issue of transport is also as crucial to rural women's daily lives.

Within the South African context, the issue of improved rural infrastructure and support services receives prominence in the government's Reconstruction And Development Programme. This is accompanied by very strong measures aimed at prioritising basic services such as health, water to reach the most remote areas in the rural communities.

Brett (1991:6) offers an alternative but complementary approach to the problem by insisting that the status quo be challenged. This means a concerted effort at addressing perceived inequalities between men and women. The aim is social change and the empowerment of women (Penny 1991:18).

### 5.3.3 WATER AND SANITATION

In response to a range of basic services which are most impressive in the rural areas of South Africa, the Public Works Programme aims at building infrastructure through labour intensive activities. Among the most needed assets identified by the Public Works Programme to alleviate poverty and reduce the heavy burden facing rural women are schools, roads, clinics, crèches and water supply including proper sanitation and sewerage systems (NRDF 1994:11).

Major problems still persist in most developing countries in water provision, water is scarce in some remote areas with water having to be bought for human consumption and vegetable growing (EDA 1985:79).

For these women trying to make a living through running of child-care centres, this is an extremely disillusioning factor for rural women as proper sanitation facilities are also lacking. To compound the problem even more, water collection involves such factors as distance from the water source, presumably a number of trips per day. Moreover according to Dankelman and Davidson (1988:34) where water projects would play a crucial role and satisfy a need, throughout the developing world water projects designed to improve local conditions still take low priority in development programmes. However, this situation is now changing in South Africa.

The Environmental Development Agency (1985:80) conducted a study amongst rural women who had common concerns and needs. At a meeting held in 1985 in Bochum, a village in the Northern Province, rural women took it upon themselves to rid their communities of poor sanitation facilities and lack of water which has posed health hazards within their communities. Those represented came from Acornhoek, Elim, Letaba and surroundings.

This received much publicity as the Transvaal Rural Action Committee-TRAC- (1994:38) has also noted the bias by governments and donors alike in favouring large scale and prestigious water schemes with the assumption that benefits would soon reach poor women. Hence Moser (1987:114) sets forth a differentiation between practical and strategic gender needs in projects.

The main theme in the case of Bochum women centred around learning about sanitation and whose responsibility it is within the communities, that is the individuals, the community as a whole or the government. The communities took the responsibility of sharing ideas using resources at their disposal to improve their quality of life as it appeared in some areas even the most traditional pit-lactrine was non-existent. The overall feeling was that women's own efforts in improving their own living conditions were a step towards women's self-empowerment.

Elsewhere in Africa, Nafziger (1988:31) reports that in 1981, rural Nigeria had very limited proper sanitation and central sewerage systems. About half the population emptied used water in buckets into streets or in waste ground, visible garbage on streets is common with the subsequent result of overflowing because of inadequate drainage. Rural Nigeria's water supply did not grow as fast as its population. The typical practice is to draw often polluted water from wells or streams in cans or rubber bags and to carry it home for several kilometres. The latter is women's and children's task ( Nafziger 1988:31). This is also typical of much of Africa.

The situation seems to be prevalent in rural Zimbabwe where Morgan (1990:20) reveals that shallow hand-dug wells are used more by people than any single source of water in rural Zimbabwe. Such wells are subject to gross contamination and very often yield water of unacceptable quality. The victims are the women, children and elderly as they do not have enough means or resources at their disposal to fend for themselves compared to men.

On a very broad perspective, the World Bank (1987:iii) made a plea to developing countries on water provision and improved sanitation facilities. The World Bank noted that the decade for International Water Supply and Sanitation was more than half over with its quantitative goals unlikely to be met. This made special reference to the rural areas where past investments have often fallen short of their objectives. In many cases, the Bank argues, because of a lack of community input and proper maintenance, systems tend to go out of operation faster than new ones are being built.

Das and Das (1992:1371) say it is apparent that Third World governments tend to put a façade of concern for rural women's development. Otherwise, in talking of participation, of people's involvement, the government's would be taking trouble to find out more deeply what the real needs of women are. It would seem from the forgoing discussion, the issue of community participation plays a dominant role in any activity, involving community life with women's priorities and needs being crucial issues.

### 5.3.4 TELECOMMUNICATION

Another important component that offers support in any development process in rural areas are telecommunication facilities such as telephone lines. In addition to the provision of the various services, rural infrastructural development has been hampered by a lack of an information infrastructure. This plays a critical role in educational, agricultural, health, safety, roads, policing, and a variety of indispensable backbones for the development of socio-economic sectors at large.

As a result of underdevelopment in rural areas, access to telecommunication services has led to the deprivation of these environments of an important tool that educates and informs the rural poor. Added to high literacy rates among rural women, their problems become even more complex. Hence Hardiman (1988:323) states that the result is a need for fieldworkers to act as educators in the dissemination of crucial information and the use of new tools that are also new to rural women.

The telecommunications infrastructure in South Africa also faces similar problems and it lags behind that of urban areas in its capabilities. With low to non-existent literacy levels amongst women in rural areas, new measures required to be instituted by policymakers should be to address the imbalances of the past created by regional distortions in political terms. A very low percentage of the households have access to a telephone service which is a need considering the scarcity of emergency facilities around the rural areas. Adams and Stephens (1994:1) argue that telecommunications plays a significant role in the economic viability of any nation. That rural communities are affected negatively by a lack of telecommunication infrastructure seems not to be understood especially in the enhancement of the economies of rural areas.

Much has been said in South Africa on the Reconstruction and Development Programme and its delivery of services, but little seems to be done, instead a range of constraints appear to be decelerating the programme in the rural areas. This causes much concern as the programme gives special emphasis to the rural areas and the current position of women, both implementation seems far away from the targets set.

## 5.4 WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Frustration and dissatisfaction has marked much current thought about women's participation in development initiatives. Rural women's organizations are effective means and expressions of their needs primarily based on the principle of self-help, and above all run by the members themselves.

The lagging behind by women in opportunities such as education has had wide ramifications for the development process (Jorgensen 1992:11). Not only have women been excluded as an important part of development they have also been excluded from that rightful place in societies' advance. This has resulted in an ill-informed population (Jorgensen 1982:11).

The FAO (1979:24) defines rural organizations as bodies run and controlled by their members to a large extent. Members are to decide upon and engage in socio-economic programmes as well as in bargaining or decision-making activities. It distinguishes between standard and participating rural organizations with the former characterized by formal and official concepts and policies often imported from abroad. They are mostly government agency with a top-down approach, the idea being that benefits will trickle-down from above (FAO 1979:23).

Ideas in the literature promote the concept of conscientization sometimes referred to as "awareness training". Bergdall (1993:13) argues that conscientization occurs through the limited intervention of outsiders who interact with people by posing problems and generating discussions, thereby awakening people to the structural causes of poverty. This is an educational process of discovery.

In practice, whatever term one chooses, it must be directly linked to the fostering of community-based organizations and activities. This challenge is a huge one because complex factors must be carefully addressed if the rural women are to become agents of their own development. Patterns of passivity must be broken, structural constraints must be recognised realistic options must be found and practical action must be collectively organised in conjunction with women's inputs. This process Snyder (1995:6) explains as a state of enabling individuals to take their destiny into their own hands.

Organising in general based on grassroots initiatives and control has been identified by the I.L.O. (1980 a:36) as a more effective strategy to give women access to and control over resources as well as to promote their participation. A number of strategies suggested by the I.L.O. (1980 a:37) are:

- i. organisations should ensure that rural women share equitably in the fruits of their labour and in national resources;
- ii. organisations must enable people to identify their own needs and priorities as well as their own solutions to problems;
- iii. there should be a continuous process of conscientisation - its purpose being to develop critical awareness that power is ultimately with the people themselves;
- iv. concrete and local issues should be points of entry for conscientisation;
- v. for more effective organisation, codes/catalysts should be carefully and systematically mobilised and trained;
- vi. funds should be made available not only for training but also for the institutional support of activities.

## 5.5 ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S NEEDS

The value attached to considering the affected communities needs and priorities in promoting development has been widely documented in Third World literature. For example, Muchena (1982:31) conducted a study in rural Zimbabwe. According to the survey conducted, women's needs were expressed by participants as in economic and educational aspects: to increase family income, education for the acquisition of income generation skills.

Anker (1982:23) attributes the lack of information on rural women to traditional demographic, sociological, economic and labour force surveys that tend to provide crude and often inaccurate information on the economic work of women. Many of the productive activities done by women are frequently not considered to be economic activities.

According to Rosa (1994:91) along with women's organisation through trade unions, women in community, based organisations in Sri Lanka voiced a need to be educated about their rights inside and outside the household.

As noted in the previous sections, women are known to work long hours carrying water, processing food and sewing activities which definitely increase the family's economic well-being. Cultural biases also have a role with the result that the expression of one's needs undermined. The models of development which were exported to the South have failed to serve the needs of the majorities of the people, also those of the women. The main method of implementation in rural projects has been through top-down hand-outs of free goods and services (Longwe 1991:147). When training is included it is for these skills deemed appropriate by authorities for non-working housewives and mothers. These methods have remained popular precisely because they are politically safe, not questioning the traditionally accepted role of women. These practices have resulted in the exclusion of women from development programmes operated by the mainstream development funders (Munro 1991:173).

One of the effects of agro-industry (although in some cases it has created employment for women) has been displacement of traditional income-generating activities of women. Many donor organizations are orientated to traditional crafts- often handicraft projects. This will not necessarily result in either the rural women's workload reduction or their economic possibilities being increased, as the lack of training and skills remains a major problem. The lack of training and skills is coupled by the rural women often being victims of economic recession as they lack the expertise that would have otherwise provided alternatives for survival.

Most of the failures of handicraft projects are attributed to 1) the inadequacy of resources for women; 2) lack of skills training; 3) lack of markets for selling the goods (Mayoux 1991:222). Redclift (1990:88) has argued that the issue of sustainable agricultural systems in low resource areas calls for an analysis of structural impediments. To this regard, governments are viewed as embarking on costly development programmes that do not work and devoting soil conservation programmes to the symptoms rather than the causes of major land degradation - a situation that cripples the economic viability of rural areas even more.

Once again, many conservation based projects fail because they were imposed from the top in a cultural vacuum, without any serious attempt whether to involve local women or to understand their needs. As a result local communities, which were not involved in the planning or maintenance of the projects, see no tangible advantages and abandon them.

On the other hand donor-resistance to small scale projects has led to their neglect, with such projects being overlooked because the preparations are said to be excessive compared with large projects (Savane 1980:26).

Studies conducted by Huston (1979:20) among the rural women of the densely populated region of north-western Kenya, reveal that many of the young people have immigrated to the larger towns. Traditionally the women cultivate, process and cook families food, fetch water and firewood supply in addition to bearing and raising the children. What came out of the interviews by Huston was the need by the women to be educated. They viewed their very low literacy levels as their own "ignorance" a situation evidenced in people not even knowing their own age.

In addition to improved literacy levels, what the women spelt out was that they needed teachers to teach them agricultural skills, sewing and handicrafts. The women tried to earn money and they needed an adult education building. What became apparent also was that they wanted their children to be educated so that their communities could have good leaders. The need to have only four children, to educate a girl than a boy, to assist in daily household chores was of paramount importance to the women. This was so, as the women believed that boys tend to get married and take care of their wives in contrast to what the girls could do within the household (Huston 1979:21).

Human resource development therefore with regards to rural women's development can be of service only if women are located within reach. Decision making and problem solving skills ought to be developed by women for women, to allow participation in concrete programmes such as those designed in agriculture, income-generation, literacy, health, education and acceptable technical skills.

Development workers will need to identify and analyse new opportunities for learning and create strategies which enable poor women to gain more of what they need within their own environments. In addition employers, government agencies, donors, community based organizations all have a part to play in providing inputs while at the same time allowing women to be the key role player in their own development.

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

It would appear from the discussion that the assumption that development inevitably pushes rural women into the subsistence sector is not adequate for a total understanding of the process. I believe that rural women's roles in unremunerated familial labour on systems of small-scale production for the market is as prejudicial to their interests and needs as their marginalisation in the subsistence sector.



Within the context of declining productivity and infrastructure, deteriorating social and economic conditions, and development strategies within the Third World at large that are imposed, fail to improve the quality of life of the rural poor.

This with the short-comings of top-down planning processes have given way to an ideology of development from below. The advent of the worldwide view that popular participation means a process of organization evolving the conscientization of people negatively affected by underdevelopment, contests directly the manner in which rural localities live their daily lives.

It is therefore incumbent upon those in authority to realise and redefine the needs of rural women in practical terms. The challenge now faces policy-makers to give more serious attention to empirical evidence focusing on rural communities needs and not only statistical information that is meaningless. These needs ought to be granted serious attention in order of priorities if development for women is to succeed.

Simply put, for the policy-maker an ear to research is warranted, mixed with the sensitivity to the local population that will be affected by policy directives. The underlying mission should be to implement programmes that produce desirable results to localities and not programmes that will just be additions to existing statistics.

Development strategies for rural women should be addressed to the problems that concern them.

# CHAPTER 6

## CONCLUSION

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The following chapters namely; 2, 3, 4, and 5 of this study have revolved around the main objectives of Gender Issues in Development within an African context as outlined in Chapter 1. These chapters form sub-objectives of the study, facilitating an analysis of gender issues from a historical perspective and current problems facing women in the process of development.

This was with a view to forming an evaluation of women's situation and of importance, attempting to achieve the main objectives of the study. This final chapter sums up the preceding sections and provides alternative development initiatives in addressing gender inequalities in Africa.

### 6.2 THE DOMESTICATION OF WOMEN

The underlying assumption of most literature on women in Africa stating that women's socio-economic status is not that low compared to that of related men, needs to be re-examined. This point is particularly important since most women have neither had a pool of their own resources nor shared resources equally with their husbands and / or male lineage members.

Whether the resources in question are land, labour or education, women's access to these resources has been less than that of men. Barnes and Win (1992:7) note that African women have had no legal equality compared to men.

One of the means by which men have dominated and controlled women has been to give women a "well-defined" but circumscribed position within households and society at large. Attached to this position was some "status", "honour" and "respectability" designed by men. The parameters of this position, within which may be found the notion of "ideal womanhood" tend to be questionable (Brink 1990:11).

Those women who even partially begin to question society and their role within it lose privileges of this position because having questioned social norms and structures, they are no longer as controllable and society is said to lose its power over them. Stamp(1986:31) seeks to explain the universal domination of women by men throughout history, by referring to patriarchy to designate the gender system under which all forms of women oppression occur.

Some studies have revealed the subordination of women by tracing the roots of such subordination within African societies to Western penetration of traditional economies that ignored women as producers. To this regard, Dee Vellenga (1986:65) quotes Boserup (1970) as having pioneered the work on the marginal role of women. It was men who were trained or educated and who gained predominance in the production, trading and administrative networks connected with production in rural areas. Cash crops reflected the incorporation of men into a Western-dominated world economy to the neglect of women.

Women in Africa suffer under a male dominated society which imposes both social and legal disadvantages. With low levels of education compared to men they have been poorly represented in government. They suffer from male restrictions and control over their economic activities (Mac Gaffey 1986:161).

Closely related to their low levels of education, Kettel (1986:59) draws a picture of women that has a more disconcerting shape as while a few women are acquiring rights in property, access to an absolutely independent life is lacking. Although they are an eager audience for information that will help them to care for themselves and their children with greater ease and success, the support required from those in authority is minimal to non-existent.

Gender oppression within households is identified by Gwagwa (1971:125) as being more of a practical problem. The household is a very central site where all forms of subordination, be they national, economic or gender related are acted out. The issue of migrancy by male household members has dislocated families due to the absence of men, leaving women behind to fend for their families. This instability becomes fertile grounds for the mushrooming of new households' way of life specifically taking into account the new role assumed by a woman without sufficient means at her disposal, to head the household.

Amongst low income families, women headed households tend to be the poorest, which points to the fact that by heading households, the women's position in the production sphere does not necessarily change in any significant manner. If this is the case, then to what extent and under what circumstances can women headed households be considered self-sufficient? This we can establish if a conceptual framework for analysing the household is drawn not just on the basis of household form, but taking gender relations as its central focus.

Another important factor that has compounded the problems facing women has been the introduction of sophisticated technologies including machinery to the detriment of women. These measures are according to Bujra (1986:119) promoting gender biases. If one takes into account the fact that African economies are not developed, modern forms of technological developments, the lack of proper infrastructural support suitable to women's needs have not been accompanied by a general transformation of the position of women within households and society.

These are the incredible arguments in the 1990s as well as where Dow (1971:259) observed that all over the world discrimination against women has been rationalised by paternalistic outdated notions that bind women to a domestic role. The paramount destiny and women's mission as defined by society has been to fulfil the noble and benign offices of wife and mother (Dow 1971:259).

Afonja(1986:91) argues that what makes the case of women particularly concerning within the issue of gender analysis in Africa is their relegation to the fringe of a class considered the lowest of all classes. Their reproductive role tends to be a priority within society and their slow incorporation into the broader picture of development is a matter of urgency.

The failure of most historians to recognise the importance of considering the marginal role of women coupled with household dynamics has therefore meant that half the story about women's domestication has been left untold. Because gender relations within the household are among the most fundamental social relations, they are a crucial explanatory factor in any society and to those concerned with women's issues. Unless we understand the interrelations between women and men at household level, we cannot fully understand the problems confronting women and society. Furthermore, any relevant information about the shaping of broader social structures that directly impact on women's lives need an understanding of the functioning of political and economic structures within societies.

### 6.3 THE NEED FOR A BETTER LIFE : MORAL REALITIES

It is apparent that women's subordination in both the domestic and social spheres arises from a wide range of factors. The household is however a terrain where disputes over the allocation of labour, control over female reproduction the distribution of resources assists in analysing women's lives within broader society. On the other hand, an analysis of gender issues of a given society that neglects the household level within which subordination of women occurs presents a distorted view of the entire process of eliminating gender biases. The origins of women's subordination cannot be solely blamed on the imposition of Western practices on an indigenous culture. Men within households and society have also dominated women including control over their labour, children and over their reproductive rights.

Schmidt (1992:2) argues that men have deliberately kept women and girls at home under the authority of their fathers and husbands. Senior African men including chiefs and headman, antagonistic as they may have been to most aspects of colonial rule in Africa continued to restrict women's control over their lives. Gender stratification within households has been a fundamental cause of women's oppression. Schmidt (1992:2) contends that African women's unequal access to power and resources has not been exclusively the result of capitalism. Other factors that have been prominent in literature have been related to the sexual division of labour within households.

Within the context of sexual division of labour, most writers acknowledge the relevance of changes in the social relations of production to gender inequality. The I.L.O. (1980 b:4) for example has outlined the issue of women's subordination by laying great emphasis on the relegation of women to the subsistence sector. Young (1980:4) observes that there seems to be almost universal agreement that in agricultural production, the know-how and credit are concentrated in the hands of men while women are assigned food production for domestic consumption. It appears that the marginalisation of women to food production - sometimes called the feminisation of agriculture - is a worldwide phenomenon. Women have become de-skilled in this sector. They have fallen from the status of income generating skilled weavers to unpaid familial labourers controlling none of the proceeds of their labour nor in charge of the totality of the labour process itself (Young 1980:9).

Women's participation in the total labour process is minimal and for those concerned with the demoralising situation within which women find themselves, this is a challenge. Women are not in effective possession of plots of land, nor do they co-ordinate the total labour process, rather they intervene at only one part of the production process namely, harvesting.

Through the loss of control of their own speciality, their subordinate position compared to men is accentuated and their social isolation is increased. At the same time, Sen (1980:42) observes that the need for supplies of unrenumerated labour lays stress on their child-rearing capacities. This means women's importance as economic agents becomes subordinated to their importance as rearers of children. This is prejudicial to their interests.

This has been partly brought about by some literature to see the interests of men and women as simply opposed or at least mutually exclusive. This, Sen (1980:41) argues that presupposes a form of sexual individuation of persons in society which is rather problematic. Both women and men exist socially not as simple individuals but through their relationship to households. It is within the household that the mechanism of survival is organised - this ranges from the sexual division of labour, forms of production activity to fertility and other decisions affecting biological reproduction. These mechanisms are usually bound together by sets of authority relations for example, patriarchy that implies dominance and subordination. Hence Brako (1990:26) states that if women are left to make their own decisions on general development issues, more progress would be made.

The assumption therefore that women share however marginally the status of associated men should be challenged. Also the re-definition of their position in society as a whole needs to be looked into with a critical mind by all those concerned with women's issues. This is a moral obligation.

## 6.4 DEVELOPMENT BY WOMEN AND FOR WOMEN

In the preceding discussion, there seems to be almost an agreement in literature that one of the common negative effects of underdevelopment is to relegate women to marginal roles where their participation in the process of development has gained little recognition. Within an African context, while it can be argued that changes have taken place in the life of rural women, it is necessary to stress the ambivalence that exists between the woman's social position on the one hand and the functions that they perform on the other. In view of the specific character of rural life with rigid patriarchal patterns, matters of dominant cultural values, women's disadvantaged economic position, rural women's marginal and poverty situation is partly attributable to underdevelopment and dependency.

In a context of rapid socio-economic change, women's survival strategies need to be re-evaluated by all involved in development processes. Related sentiments have already been echoed by Charlton (1984:17) further emphasizing the need by researchers, government policy-makers, international advisors to adopt a more dynamic and differentiated approach to women's problems. This is so because women's problems as discussed in this study are unique - the bulk of women still strive to maintain their households single handedly.

Therefore, when we speak of development for people and by people women's development ought to be based on this same principle. The most important factor is the equitable participation of women in development specifically in decision making that directly affects their daily lives.

In concluding the debate in literature about the precise impact of the historical precedent for the development on women, there is a further call on the need to value the contribution made by women within households and society as a whole. This should be carried out by taking into account the reality of promoting the well-being of women as human beings. This is to be the main pillar of any development strategy.

To form part of any legitimate public policy including development policy, the human aspect of women's well-being is to be a basis of a moral obligation around which gender issues in development should revolve.

In conclusion a suggested plan of action in addressing women's issues should include priorities to:

- 6.4.1 re-evaluate household forms, modes of inter and intra-household exchange, the status and problems of female heads of households with a view to strengthening support mechanisms;
- 6.4.2 conduct on-going research to determine the nature and extent of rural landlessness among female headed households as a basis for policies to alleviate poverty;
- 6.4.3 bring about structural and attitudinal transformation at household and societal level that will satisfy women's economic, cultural and political needs which are persistent features of history, - crucial factors in women's current subordinate position;
- 6.4.4 research and pinpoint to policy makers the need for programmes designed to extend equal access to credit, agricultural and technical information and training, income-generating activities, labour saving technology to the benefit of women;

**6.4.5 highlight the need for a strategy for female education and successful non-formal education and training programmes that are multi-faceted in nature if they are to help women in both their reproductive and productive roles;**

**6.4.6 develop and implement policies that are in harmony with indigenous culture rather than concepts, assumptions and strategies of Western origin bearing no relevance to women's environments.**

**Finally, unless the significant omissions outlined in the objectives of this study together with the suggested priorities are attended to, then development by women and for women in Africa will continue to be a myth.**



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